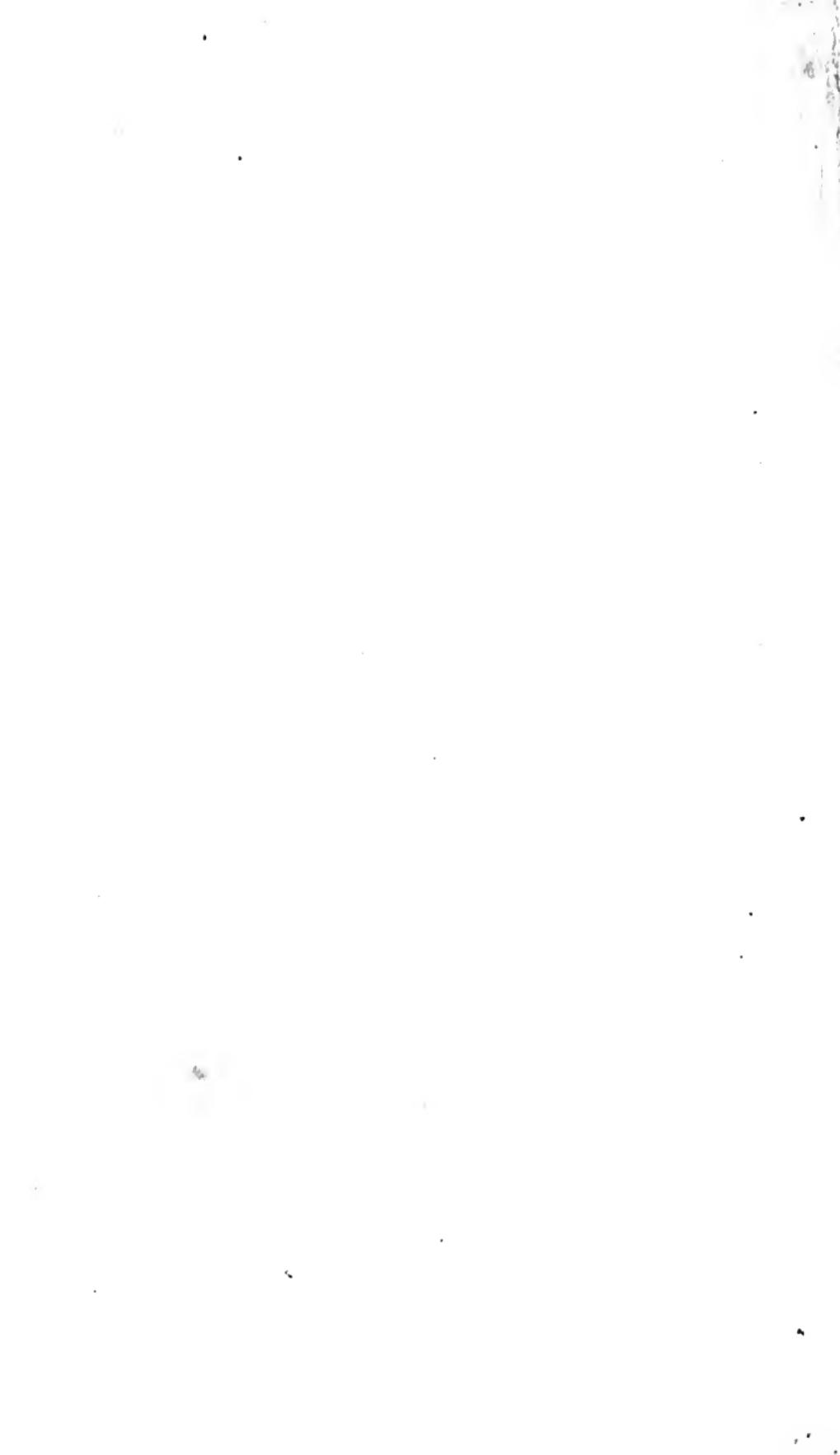


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EVA DESMOND:

OR,

MUTATION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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M U T A T I O N.

CHAPTER I.

HILTON PARSONAGE.

THE fresh bracing air of early morning felt very delightful to Eva, as, leaning upon her husband's arm, she walked up and down the quarter-deck while the vessel made way up the river to the landing quay at Bristol. Two years ago, with what different feelings she had travelled the path she was now retracing! She recollects how, from the window of her berth, she had watched the lights along the coast, and when she passed the last, felt that the world before her was dark. She thanked God that such misery cannot last unmitigated; however painful retrospection might still be, her heart acknowledged the healing influence of time: God had given her many bless-

ings, and her gratitude for them was deep and humble.

"How do we manage now, Eva?" said her husband, as they neared the quay. "Is there a train?"

"Yes; but I think we had better send the luggage by the canal, it will be cheaper. We, of course, go in the carriage."

"The deuce we do! Where do we stop the night? You are at home here, I suppose."

"I hope I shall be to-night. Hilton is but thirty-five miles from Bristol. We ought to be able to get there, resting the horse on the road. We could live for a week on what it would cost us to stop a night at an hotel. Besides, remember, you have to do duty at Hilton to-morrow."

"True, I forgot to-morrow will be Sunday."

The luggage was accordingly consigned to the care of the canal company's agent. Sultan was harnessed to the carriage; the man and maid on the box, Charles and Eva inside, the cab head up, and German shutters closed, as the morning was still cool.

"Inquire the road to Bath, and follow it,"

was Eva's direction to Ryan, as she shut down the glass.

"This *is* luxurious if it can only last," said Charles, as he lay back in the carriage and pulled a volume of Eusebius from his pocket: five minutes more, and he might have been in the stage wagon for aught he knew. They drew up at an humble looking inn in a small street in the suburbs of Bath. There the horse was stabled and they had some breakfast, after which they went into the town to make purchases of some furniture Eva had thought too cumbersome to bring from Ireland; she had reserved 30*l.* for the purpose. The things were to be forwarded by canal, and would arrive at Hilton on Monday morning.

The travellers accomplished the remaining three-and-twenty miles with one other stoppage for food and rest for Sultan. It was about seven o'clock in the evening when they passed down the street of Hilton. The street, for though there were little streets branching from it, like ribs from the back-bone of a fish, Hilton might be said to consist, properly speaking, of but one street—a long, straggling, uneven street, with dingy irregular houses, which might have presented the very same appearance

they now did a hundred years ago. On either side were shops, that seemed to have never altered one iota since they were first established, in a small way, a century or more before ; never advanced with the times, but retained their primitive aspect of bygone fashion, in inglorious ignorance of the plate glass and gold lettered progress of civilization. The doors of many were high, and approached by two or three uneven steps. In the centre of the street, leaving but a narrow passage on each side between it and the houses, (barely what a wagon could pass through), was situated the town hall—a dusky brick building, which so obscured the windows of the houses parallel with it, as to render them of little use. As usual in buildings of the kind, a market was held in the open space beneath, above which was a court-house ; which also served as a meeting-room on any public occasion, or as a ball-room, when such a luxury was needed, it being the only room of any adequate dimensions in the town.

Down this street Eva passed—not slowly, for Ryan, true Irishman, had kept a “trot for the town”—down this street where Ernest had lodged ; where she had often lingered with him while Agnes did her shopping ; which he had passed

down—with what feelings she never knew—after cutting asunder the ties that bound them; which he must often have passed up with his wife on their way to Oakstone, for Weston Hall lay beyond the town on the same side as the parsonage. Up that street her own mother must have passed, when, with hope bright at her heart, as a bride she started on a life which had looked all sunshine and whose clouds had been so many. Down this street Eva now passed—emotion not unfelt because unseen—to take possession of that home she had once so coveted, and which had so singularly and so fortuitously become hers under other circumstances;—to enter on that life whose sunshine or whose clouds were enveloped in the obscurity of futurity, but held in the hollow of a Hand from which Faith told her nothing could come wrong.

Passed through the town, they arrived at the gate of the parsonage; Eva leaned forward to desire the man to stop, and gently interposing her hand between Charles and his book, asked if he had no curiosity to see his new home.

Hilton parsonage was a pretty looking residence. The front was composed of five gables, the two extreme ones being only one story in height; those on either side the centre one

contained an oriel window—there were the sitting-rooms of the parsonage. Between these windows was a rustic porch covered with ivy and flowering creepers; indeed, the whole front of the house was trellised with creeping plants, the windows seemed imbedded in foliage, which well became the simple cottage style of the structure. It was approached from the road, by a short carriage drive, coming, half circularly, through a plot of grass land, studded with flower-beds, and sufficiently large to give it more a country than a town appearance. Beyond this, divided from it by some hurdles, lay the glebe field, of moderate extent; behind the house was the garden. The travellers were expected, and fires were blazing in the rooms; but they were wholly empty: not an article of domestic use was contained within the walls. A kettle and teapot were borrowed from a cottage near, to make tea; Eva had brought some provision with her, and after partaking of it, with a fervent prayer for God's blessing to alight on their new home, she and her husband prepared to pass their first night in it, on a bed made of the carriage cushions, and some cloaks. They slept as soundly as ever did monarchs on their eider down.

The next day Charles was to commence his ministry by morning service. Eva wished not to accompany him.

"Why?" demanded her husband.

"Because people will call this week, if they see me in church, and I shall be so unsettled."

"I thought you said no one lived in the town but the doctor and a few lawyers."

"Neither do they; but families from the neighbourhood come to this church, and they may call. Who knows but the Hiltons themselves might come," she added with a smile, "they will be of your congregation."

"That is a very worldly reason for absenting yourself from the House of God. I would rather you came, my love."

Eva no longer resisted. She had brought some boxes in the carriage, and dressing herself handsomely, but quietly, she set out with her husband. They went in good time; Eva had taken her place in the parsonage pew, before any one else had come into the church. It was a square pew at the head of the church, directly in front of the reading desk. Eva chose her seat in the corner of the pew, next to the side aisle, and with her back to the congregation. On the

other side the centre aisle, beneath the pulpit, was the castle pew, of the same shape, but very much larger than the clergyman's. The church began to fill ; it was an immensely large congregation : there is a always a curiosity attending the advent of a new minister that makes people exert themselves into attendance, when perhaps, without some such extraordinary inducement, sufficient excuse for absenting themselves would have been found. It is rather a condemning test of such excuses, that they can be so easily obviated by a little counteracting temptation. Eva did not once turn round ; she knew her appearance must be known to many, with some she was personally acquainted : she preferred remaining incog. She was aware of the entrance of the Hilton family, their pew being so closely approximated to her own. The Earl and Countess, Lady Mary, some visitors, and the younger members of the family were the party. Immediately after, her husband appeared in the reading-desk and service commenced. Eva tried hard to pray, tried to detach her thoughts from things around ; it was not until he had ascended the pulpit, that she ventured to look at her husband.

Charles gave out his text. The 17th chapter

of St. John, 18th verse. His sermon, admirably adapted for an introductory one, dwelt on the duties of ministry: his voice was good, deep, and full, his manner earnest, particularly when he warmed to his subject. He had taken particular pains with this sermon, had composed it during the time he had spent alone in Lurgan, before joining Eva in Dublin, and had adapted it to the congregation which she had described to him as that he should have to preach to. It was a written sermon, but it was so impressed on Charles' memory, and so perfectly was he master of his subject, that he could scarcely be said to glance at the book. Every sentence bore the impress of the high intellect which had dictated it; at once erudite and simple; while here and there, with a not too prodigal hand, were strewn some flowers of rhetoric, which embellished without exaggerating the subject. Eva felt proud of her husband, and if, for one moment, the form of the late occupier of that pulpit had risen to her mind's eye; if one quick pang at the recollection that from where she sat *another* wife had watched her husband, had been felt at her heart; it now gave way, and no image but Charles' was in its place. She turned for the first time and looked

down the church, to see what effect he was producing. Every eye was directed to the preacher ; he had riveted the attention of the most careless. Wholly forgetful of self, heedless even of the impression he was making, solely alive to his subject and its importance, he continued earnestly and impressively to enforce it on their minds ; finishing by conjuring them to do their part, as, so help him God, he would try to do his, that when that great day of retributive justice came, on which every earthly account must be sent in, he might be able to stand with them at the foot of the judgment seat and say, “ Those Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.”

The next week was a busy one with Eva. The luggage arrived ; she instantly set about disposing of it to the best advantage, and giving to the desolate parsonage the comfortable aspect of a home. A bedroom was first made habitable, then she directed her exertions to the drawing-room. It had been newly prepared and painted, as Mr. Griffin had informed her, and looked bright and clean. Directly opposite the door by which it was entered from the hall, was another leading into the small room, of which the extreme

gable consisted. This room had been also papered with the same paper as the drawing-room, and when the door stood open, though small, it formed a rather lively addition to it. Eva covered it and the drawing-room with the gay drugget she had brought with her, and put up the curtains. There were two recesses formed by the projection of the chimney into the room; these Eva had fitted up with shelves, which she filled with the books best bound, and least likely to constitute a part of her husband's studies. Charles had a good sized collection of books; he had his father's library, to which he had considerably added by prizes gained at college and by purchases; before his marriage every penny that could be spared from food and charity had gone for books. The walls were hung with Eva's pictures; her piano, her fancy work chairs, her little sofa, were all arranged with graceful negligence about the room. The Lurgan time-piece occupied a prominent position on the slab of a chiffonnier, bought expressly for its accommodation. The Davenport was placed in the room beyond, where any one could retire to write undisturbed. The tables, which had all deal tops, were covered with handsome cloths, and

strewn with the litter of books, papers, prints, and woman's work ; without which evidences of occupation, no room, however splendid, can convey a comfortable, *at home* feeling. Some people peculiarly possess the faculty of imparting a ray of their own elegance to everything they touch ; Eva had it in a superlative degree. With her it seemed an obligation, she could not help it ; without any study or exertion, whether she arranged the furniture, whether she carelessly threw aside the materials of her occupations, if she did but place a flower in a vase, it seemed—you could not tell how, though you felt it—to bear the reflection of her own native ease and grace.

Every one who came was struck with the altered appearance of the parsonage. In poor Mr. Hughes's time they had never deemed it capable of looking what it now did. It took their imaginations without their knowing why, and so did Eva. Independent of her great beauty, there was a charm about her : there was a graceful gentleness in her gliding movements, a ladylike repose in her manner, the converse of business or excitement ; even in her gaiety there was a languor—the shadow of the sorrow she had gone through—which was far from indicating the

active practical energy of her character : a character which had been formed by circumstances ; for had Eva been born to a life of ease and happiness, and known no breath of adversity, she would have been one of those gay, careless spirits so often met with among her compatriots, extracting fun from every event that occurred, leaving care and forethought to the wiser. But the elements of a deeper character had latently existed, and they had been developed in the alchemy of life's trials.

For the parsonage dining-room, Eva's funds had not admitted of much adornment ; a drugget, a few plain chairs and three tables, and some bookshelves, were all she could accomplish. A carpenter in the town had made the tables by her directions. They consisted merely of some deal slabs placed upon crossed legs after the manner of a camp stool. One of these occupied the centre of the room for meals, the other two were in the recesses (for the room was on the same plan as the drawing-room) ; above them were the shelves for books. Eva promised that some day or other the little room beyond should be converted into a study ; but, for the present, one of the side tables was allotted to Charles for that purpose, and it

groaned beneath the literary litter of a student. There Charles spent all his evenings, often many hours of the night; Eva at the other, sometimes reading or writing also, but more frequently engaged in domestic occupations. But whether she was mending her husband's stockings—and he did grind them into holes terribly—or stoning raisins for his pudding, or cutting up an old sheet into dusters, she was the same personification of refinement and grace, that shed a soft lustre over a drawing-room circle; no occupation, however homely, could disenchant her of that inherent attribute. She was always at these times very still and silent; she knew it to be necessary to the student's well doing; even when she stole away to bed, it was with a step too noiseless to distract his attention or disturb his train of thought. Sometimes, before she went, the book would be gently stolen from his hand and a pen substituted in its place, then with an apologizing kiss on his forehead she would say—

“This greedy head will be too full if it does not give back something of all that is put into it.”

CHAPTER II.

NEW DUTIES.

CHARLES STANHOPE had won golden opinions of all who had been present at his introductory sermon. In Hilton such a sermon was a novelty. Prosy homilies enough they had been in the habit of hearing from Mr. Hughes; good, plain, practical sermons from Ernest Clifton; but Charles's bore unmistakeable evidence of being the emanation of high and carefully cultivated intellect, as well as of one strongly imbued with deep feelings of the solemnity of the responsibility he had undertaken. In worldly phraseology it was a most "successful" sermon, and numbers hastened to call, who would have taken a longer time had it not been for the recognition or repute of that distinguished rhetorical introduction.

Mr. Oakley was their first visitor; the sermon did not bring him; he came as an old friend, and

bespoke the renewal of cordial intimacy. Lord and Lady Hilton, and their daughter, Lady Mary, were amongst the first ; Eva had but just put the finishing touch to her drawing-room when they came. They were very kind, and affable, and seemed to wish to be on friendly terms. Lord Hilton engaged Charles on his favourite subject of physico-theology ; there the curate was his master : he had stores of knowledge to draw on that the Earl had never heard of; could advance principles, support arguments, produce evidences, and quote authors, seemingly without limit. As far as the Earl knew, his views accorded with the scholar's ; and they appeared likely to become allies. Meanwhile the Countess interested herself in Eva's house and concerns, admired her arrangements, and promised to supply her garden with flowers from the castle. Lady Mary, charmed with Eva's drawings and work, invited her to become a frequent guest there.

Eva did not suffer her domestic employments to preclude her taking an interest in her husband's parochial duties. The first week of her arrival she dedicated two hours of every afternoon to calling on the parishioners with him. They visited the shopkeepers, tradespeople, small

householders, all whose rank or position would not warrant their making the advance of acquaintance-ship. Eva's soft ingratiating manner quickly won its way with them; her felicitous urbanity contributed not a little to the popularity which her more absent husband, erudite and conscientious as he was, without her assistance, would have failed in the same degree to inspire. In many little ways her own feelings encountered trials, which in a strange neighbourhood would have been spared her; allusions were made to the former pastor, sometimes to his wife—there was the rub! At times events would accidentally recall him. To ease Charles' work, and give him more time for literary pursuits, Eva had taken on herself the collecting of the various subscriptions and club deposits, which were naturally the province of a clergyman, and the management of their accounts. The money hitherto received had been paid into the bank by Ernest Clifton, the books and papers connected with it being sent in a sealed box to the parsonage. These Eva looked over and made herself mistress of—not without a pang; but it was done.

Saturday was club day. Seated at a table in the little porch of the parsonage Eva received the

money, saying a kind word of introduction to each contributor who approached. When the last had passed, she sat gazing silently at the club sheet she had been filling up; the last entry had been in Ernest's handwriting; she gazed at the place where hers joined it, until she could no longer see for the blinding tears. When handwriting is familiar, nothing more recalls the absent. There is something vivifying in any connecting link, but above all, in one of manipulation: the hand so distant, the handicraft so near; when it is between two people morally dead to each other it makes the separation stand out in more utter desolation. With a heavy sigh Eva folded the sheet and went slowly into the house.

There were clerical meetings in that part of the diocese where Hilton was situated—that is, the clergymen met once a month at the house of one or other of the members, where they dined and discussed subjects selected for the purpose at the previous meeting. Charles was proposed and elected a member at the second meeting which took place after his arrival. He was to be present at this meeting, having been invited to attend as a guest.

As the place of its holding for that day was at

a clergyman's about four miles on the other side of Brackley, Mary Phillips wrote to Eva to invite her and her husband to come over to them on the morning of the meeting, and she could remain with her while the gentlemen were absent, and a bed should be prepared for them at night.

This invitation the Stanhopes accepted. They took an early breakfast and drove to Brackley. Desiring the carriage to wait at the gate, they walked up the narrow path which led from it to the curate's door. The door was partly open. Eva rang the bell, but no one answered it; she rang again with the same success. Through the side lights she could see two dirty, neglected-looking children come into the passage and peep towards the door. As soon as they saw her eye catch them they ran back again, and disappeared until they could summon courage enough to make another sortie.

"Perhaps, Edward has set out," said Eva. She pushed the door open, and holding out her hand, tried to coax the children to her; Eva seldom failed when she coaxed. By degrees the children seemed attracted by her winning smile; the eldest approached slowly, followed, but more shyly, by the other. Still encouraging the child

towards her with her outstretched palm, Eva asked—

“ Is your papa in the house, darling ; or has he gone out ? ”

“ He’s in the kishin,” said the child, looking up with a thawed, admiring look at the sweet face of the visitor.

“ Is he going out, my dear ? ”

“ I tink he is ; I did saw him keening his boots.”

Eva could not resist a smile. The second child had by this time ventured near enough to get through a door opening from the passage into the parlour. Eva could hear her say—

“ Ma’, Polly’s talking to a yady.”

Immediately Mary Phillips appeared at the door, a baby in her arms. Her appearance, like the children’s, was sadly neglected ; but her manner and way of speaking was very lady-like. She welcomed Eva cordially. “ I did not think it was you,” said she ; “ so many rings come to this door from beggars and vendors, we have quite got not to mind them.”

“ Dear Mary, I am glad to see you again,” said Eva. “ This is my husband ; you must make his acquaintance.”

Mrs. Phillips expressed pleasure to do so, and led them into the room she had come from.

"Pray excuse this untidy room," she said (and a comfortless room it looked with the breakfast things not yet removed), "fire is not lighted yet in the drawing-room. I find it hard to have things regular with bad servants, and so many little trots to look after. Do not sit on that chair, Eva; I think Polly has been eating bread and butter on it; come on the sofa." She moved a saucepan of bread and milk off the latter, wiping up some that had been spilled with the feeding cloth from round her infant's neck. "I have been giving Miss Baby her breakfast," she continued, "the nurse has gone out of a message. Sit down; it is quite clean now."

But Eva, feeling some qualms for her silk dress, remained standing.

"I hope Edward has not gone; Charles can give him a seat."

"No; he is not yet gone; he will be glad of the seat, I am sure. Edward is not strong, and over-walks himself. Polly, darling, look for papa, and tell him Mr. Stanhope is here."

"He is in the kishin," said Polly again.

"Go and tell him, love."

"He knows ; he is keening his boots," replied the tactless little monkey.

Presently he appeared. Slovenly and untidy he looked, notwithstanding the pains he had been at with his feet ; his linen was clean, but such a colour from wretched washing it could hardly be supposed to be intended to pass for white. In his hand was a black gaiter. After a few words of welcome to the guests, he said—

"Mary, I can't find my other gaiter."

"I did not see it, dear," replied his wife ; "where did you take it off last ?"

"Somewhere here, last night." He looked about the carpet, as if he was surprised at not seeing it lying there.

"Hold baby, and I will look for it." She plumped down the child on his lap and commenced searching about unsuccessfully ; once she pulled something black from behind the coalbox and thought she had it ; no, that was a waistcoat. "Children have any of you seen papa's black gaiter ? "

"I did saw Jess making a counsherpane for her doll's bed wid she," said Polly, and diving under the sofa she reappeared with the lost article.

"Good child," said her mother, handing the

garter to Edward and relieving him of the baby. "What a pretty carriage," she remarked to Eva, as they stood together at the door seeing the gentlemen depart. "Is it yours?"

"Yes, one we brought from Ireland."

"How nice to be able to keep one; nothing I should like better than driving. You look very nice, yourself, Eva," she continued, turning and looking admiringly at her guest; "very nice and very elegant; the cares of life have not yet come on you. I could almost envy you." Eva sighed. Mary Phillips had never known either desertion or jealousy.

After Charles's election as a member had unanimously been agreed to, he spoke on the subject under discussion at the meeting. It was without preparation or even previous knowledge of what the subject was to be; but once he began to speak, the others quickly saw they might all go to school to him. The funds of his knowledge appeared so inexhaustible, the powers of his intellect so concentrated; it seemed as though that one subject had been the study of his life, and every evidence that could be brought to bear on it searched into, every consequence that could be deduced from it weighed, his reasonings were so

sound, his deductions so truthful. When Charles threw himself into a subject he seemed to lose sight of every other consideration—his own individuality, the circumstance of his having listeners, the subject itself possessed every faculty; he appeared to hear, see, or be conscious of nothing else. Perfect command of a subject must always to some extent induce command of language. When ideas are so clear that they have but to be expressed, the simplest language will serve, the less exaggerated the more lucid; such was the language in which Charles now spoke, in which he always expressed his ideas when he could be got to let his light shine, or, as his wife playfully expressed it, to take the bushel off, ("it was always burning beneath," she said). But he was no egotist; suddenly recollecting where he was, he stopped and apologized for having forgotten himself and spoken so long.

"Go on; go on," said many voices; but he could not be got to take up the subject again.

The ladies had retired to their rooms when the two curates returned. Eva was still sitting up, anxious to hear a report of the day's proceedings.

"The theological subject was a very deep one," said Charles, in answer to her inquiries; "no one there seemed to me to know how to handle it, except your cousin Edward Phillips: not that his views accord with mine—they are tinctured with popish doctrine; still, he was the only one whose mind could grapple with the subject. On the practical one he spoke badly; in my opinion, quite abroad of the mark. There was another cousin of yours there, Eva—Mr. Clifton, my predecessor at Hilton."

"Was Ernest Clifton there?" said Eva, quietly; "I thought he had been in Hertfordshire."

"Is staying at his father's, I think they said. I heard him tell some one he only arrived last night."

"Did he speak?"

"Not in the doctrinal discussion. He spoke sensibly and to the purpose on the other."

"True type of both characters," said Eva. "Ernest Clifton is essentially a practical man, Edward Phillips a theoretical. And what did my husband do? did he let his light shine, or did he keep the bushel on?"

"I spoke for some time on the theological

subject: I was at home there: I understood it."

"Then I am sure you spoke well."

"Effectively, I think; at least, they seemed to listen with interest; I could have said much more, but being a stranger, I did not like to trespass; indeed, when I recollect, I was sorry I had spoken so long."

"If none of them could talk on it they must have been glad to hear some one who could. Did you speak on the practical question? What was it?"

"It was an inquiry into the best method of obtaining parochial subscriptions for charities. I made but one remark, 'to endeavour to lead the hearts of the parishioners to serve God rather than mammon.'"

"A clergyman's view of the case."

"I am a clergyman, Eva, and wish my whole life and conversation to uphold my calling. I don't know the country well enough yet to enter on a practical exposition. It seems to me different places would take different means."

"Were you speaking to——to the former curate of our place?"

"No; I was named to him by Phillips, but I thought he seemed to fight shy of me."

"He comes from a distant family," replied Eva coldly, and the conversation dropped.

"That is an uncomfortable house of Edward Phillips," said Charles, as he and Eva sat together after dinner the following day. "They never seem to know where anything is, and those dirty children are crawling and squalling everywhere."

Eva laughed. "That is what the rest of the family are afraid you and I will turn into, Charles. They are wishing us at the bottom of the sea for coming here at all."

"How do you know?"

"I have known them a long time."

"I do not think, love, they need be alarmed lest you should have things such a mess. The Edward Phillips must be very poor; nothing but his curacy, I suppose."

"They have 300*l.* a year."

"And we have but 200*l.*! Eva, you will break!"

"I hope not, Charles. I mean to keep accounts square; to do without what I cannot pay for, and yet, to bear my head too proudly for my relations to look on me as a disgrace." Her swan-like throat was haughtily erected, and a smile, half-sad half-scornful, curled her classic upper lip.

CHAPTER III.

THE BALL.

To no one individual in Wiltshire did the appointment of Charles Stanhope to the curacy of Hilton give so much dissatisfaction as to Mrs. Herbert. Grievance the first: she wanted Edward Phillips to have it. It would have added 50*l.* yearly to his income, which, conjointly with the parsonage and its appurtenances, would have enabled him to make a much more respectable appearance: moreover, it would remove him ten miles farther from them, and take his ill-organized establishment and unaggrandizing family from directly “under their noses.” Grievance the second: she did not wish another family of relations, possessed of small means, coming to settle, if not directly under their noses, at least within earshot of them. The probable consequence would be a multiplication of the race, with inadequate means of providing for them, consequently a decreasing proportion of

those luxuries and elegancies, which she, who had a sufficient income, and was careful not to subdivide it, was able to surround herself with, and which she regarded as necessary concomitants for the respectability of an establishment. Grievance the third : Eva's return to her vicinity was a sore subject to her. Do what she would, feeling could not be entirely stifled ; argue her right of purpose and right of action with the most subtle philosophy, machiavelian if she would, there is always an unpleasant feeling in the consciousness that we have injured another who never injured us, and that they know it. Eva not only knew it, but resented it most deeply. Mrs. Herbert knew that she had entailed sorrow and suffering on one whose every claim was for kindness and protection ; that in her anxiety to save Ernest she had thrown Eva overboard, and his after marriage with Mr. Herbert's ward gave their actions the semblance of self-interested motives. She had betrayed her guest, and sent her, in ignorance of the treachery, to encounter contumely and mortification, an unwelcome guest into a hostile country.

Eva's instantaneous departure from Oakstone, her indignant refusal of all overtures of pacification, and her utter rejection of all communication with

her aunt, bore testimony to the deep resentment with which the injury had been received. There is something, too, sad and mortifying in an alienated affection ; it is losing something we once possessed. Eva had long been a friend and confidant ; now, all affection and all confidence were at an end.

One extenuating plea must be admitted in Mrs. Herbert's behalf. At the time of her unhappy interference she did not know what wild work she was making ; did not know how deeply Eva's affections were engaged : perhaps, was not capable of appreciating them ; did not realize the acute misery she was bringing on her ; did not expect that matters would have come to such a climax, assumed an aspect of such open hostility, as they did at Oakstone. She had hoped that the attachment would have been unobservantly extinguished, and that Eva would for ever remain in ignorance of her participation in the overthrow of her happiness. But in this she was disappointed. To her hand Eva had traced the blow. In those few bitter days at Oakstone, when, in the prostration of Eva's former self, each had tried to avert from themselves the odium of having brought to such anguish one so dear ; then, in the explanations accorded, the injury was followed back to its

source. The Cliftons, not wishing to arrogate to themselves more of the vexatious interference between the lovers than was necessary, gladly laid the discovery and suggested opposition upon Mrs. Herbert. However expedient an unkindness may be deemed, no one likes theirs to have been the hand that dealt it. That Eva knew the hand, conjointly with the total failure of her own efforts at justification and reconciliation, was to Mrs. Herbert the cause of considerable distaste of the prospect of renewed juxtaposition and intercourse with her estranged niece: and though she never, for one moment, admitted that she had done wrong by her, but maintained the integrity of the action whatever the consequence, and spoke with scornful bitterness of Eva's unjustifiable resentment, there were times when alone with her conscience, a still small voice would whisper that hers had not been the part of Eva's friend.

It was by common report she heard of Mr. Stanhope's appointment. At first she only knew that he was an Irishman, "with a dreadful brogue, no doubt." She reprobated the choice most strenuously: as if it were anything to her. Then a letter from Agnes Clifton mentioned a report circulated in their neighbourhood, that

the new curate was Eva's husband. Notwithstanding the estrangement, Mrs. Herbert felt aggrieved that no communication of the fact had been made to her: "not to know any more of the movements of one's own relations than perfect strangers!" and the lip went up in an angle. Eva came—came as among strangers; unrecognising all nearer ties, ignoring all previous associations: pride has many ways of showing itself. Then came the fame of Charles's opening sermon—a circumstance by no means mollifying his aunt-in-law's displeasure at his advent. On the principle that the greater luminaries eclipse the lesser, she did not covet shining lights coming into the diocese when her husband's untrimmed lamp was dimly burning, (the presumption of a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, setting up for more learning than one of Christ's Church Oxford). Doing a little jealousy on her own part, much as she feared pulling down, she did not want Eva's husband to be thought more of than her own.

Every circumstance seemed to add to her discomfiture. The Earl of Hilton's eldest son, Lord St. John, had been abroad for his health; a warmer climate had restored it; he was

now returning home, and it was considered desirable by the inhabitants of Hilton and its neighbourhood to testify their joy on the occasion by giving a ball in the Town-hall. The shopkeepers, doing a little business on their own account, warmly seconded the idea. It was mentioned at the Castle. The family, who intended Lord St. John to stand for the borough at the ensuing election, appeared flattered by the compliment, and promised to attend the ball. That clinched the business. There were no back doors to withdraw through: now that the family had been spoken to, the ball was to be. A committee was formed, a subscription list started, and emissaries despatched through the country to enlist the county families in the cause. Charles thought that being a clergyman, he might be exempted from attending the ball, without incurring the risk of being supposed to fail in sympathy or respect to the great family of his parish; but Eva wished to go, and he was too uxorious a husband to refuse her anything which promised to contribute to her pleasure.

When Mrs. Herbert heard of the projected ball she was under the impression that the Stanhope's would not go; however, in that she was

mistaken, as we have seen by Charles' inability to resist his wife's pleading. When Mrs. Herbert found they had been there, curiosity to hear of them was the predominating feeling in her mind, and with the object of gratifying it she wrote to Agnes to volunteer a visit of a few days at Oakstone.

Ernest Clifton had returned to Grimstone Priory after the ball, but his house not being yet prepared, Clara remained at her father-in-law's. Addressing herself to her, when the ladies had assembled in the bay window after dinner, having left the gentlemen in the dining-room, on the evening of Mrs. Herbert's arrival, that lady said,

“ You were at the Hilton ball, Clara ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And met Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope there ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You remember her, do you not ? ”

“ Oh, yes.”

“ Were you speaking to her ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How did she look ? ”

“ Very well.”

“ Does she look as well as when you last saw her ? ”

“She is paler.”

“I should think that was not becoming to her.
Is it?”

“Indeed I don’t know: I think it is.”

“How was she dressed?”

“In white.”

“White silk?”

“No; something thin.”

“Oh! Aunt Herbert,” exclaimed Agnes, as she sat by her aunt’s dressing-table while she undressed that night, “you cannot think how beautiful Eva looked at the ball!”

“Clara told me she looked pale.”

“Very pale; not a shade of her former colour, except sometimes when she speaks much a slight pink blush comes into her cheeks; but it fades away again, and leaves her face like marble.”

“But is she improved by that?”

“I think so—much; she looks so interesting: not a bit ghastly, only statue-like. Her large dark eyes look so thoughtful and so eloquent, as if her very soul was looking out through them; and her smile, though less bright than formerly, is even more sweet and winning. It was, you know, almost dazzling; now there is a softness in it, not quite amounting to melancholy, but

pensive : it gives you the idea of one who would be sad when the gaiety was past. The same is in her attitude ; there is something slightly drooping in it : her movements are very graceful and gentle, but slow and rather languid."

" Did she dance ? "

" One or two quadrilles, nothing else. Lord St. John danced with her, and seemed to admire her greatly, and I saw Lord and Lady Hilton speaking for some time to both her and Mr. Stanhope."

" How was she dressed ? Clara only told me she was in white."

" She was dressed exquisitely. Her dress was not so remarkable for its costliness as its taste and beauty. It was white tarlatan with three skirts, a band of silver ribbon above the hem of each ; a full body, high to the throat, with a lace frill round the neck ; large hanging sleeves with the silver ribbon round the open part. She had bracelets, and a large cross in her frill of filagree gold and pearls, very handsome. Hers was the only high dress in the room ; the delicacy of her appearance seemed to warrant it, and you cannot think how distinguished she looked : you would remark her all over the room as the person possessing most attraction in it. No one would ever think she was

only a curate's wife: I am sure she was more looked at and talked about than any one there. Every one I spoke to was admiring her, and Mysie said the same."

"What kind of man is her husband?"

"A tall, dark, grave-looking man, dressed as a clergyman. He seemed very gentleman-like, but I was not speaking to him."

"Did not Eva introduce him?"

"Not to us. I saw her name him to several others. I heard him say to some one that it was only to please his wife he came there."

"Of course you were speaking to Eva."

"Yes; we went up to her: she was seated on a sofa at the head of the room when we went in."

"How did she receive you?"

"With the same smiling courtesy that she saluted every one else; chatted a few minutes on some indifferent subjects, and then turned and talked to others: not a particle of the familiar cordiality of near relationship,—and Eva's manner was so very warm hearted."

"How did she and Ernest meet?"

She was the very same to him as she was to us; shook hands with him and Clara, talked of the ball, and said it promised to be a good one. The

room was beginning to be warm—at first she had felt it rather cold; and she turned with the same smile to speak to some one who was passing. By her manner, no one could have supposed that there was a recollection connected with Ernest beyond any indifferent acquaintance. And yet, Eva has suffered deeply; any one who knew her before must see that, by the change in her whole appearance, manner, and tone; though perhaps a stranger might never guess it."

"And Ernest?"

"Ernest never mentioned her, even to me. He looked calm while she was speaking to him; but I could see that he was distressed. He was here but three days after the ball and he did not recover his spirits for that time. He scarcely spoke at all; he never does when he feels deeply: it is his way. I was sorry they met."

"But he is very fond of his wife."

"He is very attentive to her; but what companionship can he have with a person who never strings two sentences together? He took such delight in Eva's society. Since I saw her last I cannot help wishing it *could* have been."

"That is a foolish wish now. It would have been madness in Ernest marrying Eva. To have

them like the Edward Phillips', and he the head of the family! Clara has weighty inducements belonging to her; and once they are out of this neighbourhood, and hear or see nothing of Eva, Ernest will forget the fancy."

"Eva's appearance has haunted me ever since that ball. What must it do to Ernest, who knows how she once idolized him?"

"How did Clara look?"

"Never saw her look worse: her face was so red, and she wore that pink moire that always makes a fright of her."

"Poor Clara!"

"Poor Ernest!" thought Agnes. Why did not Agnes think that before?

After a pause, Mrs. Herbert said—

"I wonder do the Stanhopes intend to go out at all? I should think they do not, for they can never invite people back."

"I have heard of their having dined at several places: I know they were twice at the Castle."

"I suspect they have very little to live on. My sister did not say what they had; but I should think if it were anything considerable she would have been glad to mention it. I

wish they had not come into this neighbourhood. Near relations with small means settling about the country invariably pull a family down."

"Eva does not look as if she would pull anyone down; but I wish she had not come: things are so changed between us. To me Eva was as dear as a sister, she was so very kind; her heart seemed open to every one's trouble: she was never impatient or tired; but ever ready to sympathise and to help. I could bare my heart and talk to her as I could to no other living being, and never feel shy or distrustful. But I can see all that is past: her heart is closed now. Papa too feels it. He felt very much the steps he was obliged to take when Eva was here that time."

"He took more palpable ones than he need have done."

"Well, that was unfortunate: he was sorry afterwards. Eva had been a favourite with poor mamma, and was such an idol with our little darling Arlette; you cannot think how much what that child said preyed upon papa's mind."

"How so?"

"Why, after Eva left, Arlette was constantly in tears; not crying with a child's grief, but

more as if she were low-spirited. I think it may have been partly owing to the disease coming on; but whenever she was asked, she always said she was thinking of Eva; that Eva was unhappy. We tried to persuade her that she was mistaken; but she said she saw the tears running down Eva's face, and it was very pale, and Eva's face was always pink and smiling before. She did not know the circumstances, of course; but the idea seemed to take possession of her little mind, that we had been unkind to Eva. The very day before she died, she was lying in papa's arms talking to him of going to heaven, when suddenly she put her little wasted arms round his neck, and said, 'Papa, when Eva comes again I shall not be here; but will you promise not to make her fret? and when I am in heaven I can look down and see if she is happy.' He said, 'My beloved child, I wish Eva to be happy.' She answered, 'Yes, papa, but you did not make her so.' I cannot tell you how this grieved papa. I have seen the tears rolling down his cheeks while he has been speaking of it to me, after poor little Arlette left us. He cannot bear that there should be unkindness between him and any one

she was so fond of. Eva seemed to take such a hold on her affections; I often wondered at the recollection continuing so long on the mind of so young a child."

"You have not been to see the Stanhopes?" said Mrs. Herbert.

"No; papa thought it better not to call while Clara was here. It would look pointed her staying away, and her going might be awkward. Perhaps Eva would not like it."

"Why, now that Eva has married another man I should think she wanted no other person's husband," said Mrs. Herbert, sharply.

"Of course not; but painful recollections are easily recalled. We should have invited the Stanhopes here until their house was settled only for Ernest and his wife being with us. Not that they would have come, I am sure, now that I have seen Eva."

"I have not called, either," replied Mrs. Herbert, "but I think we shall, in time. I did not write to Eva on her marriage. She chose to show such resentment at my doing what I considered right; and I should think Mr. Herbert and I judged more justly than she could, that we do not feel in any haste to make overtures: but

Mr. Herbert and I have been speaking about it, and he thinks, as Mr. Stanhope is a clergyman and she a relation, it is better to look it over and countenance them by calling."

Agnes made no remark; she was thinking of Eva's bitter rejection of Ernest's mediation for the Herbarts, in which she told him that between them and her 'there was a gulf fixed.' There was a long pause. Mrs. Herbert asked rather suddenly—

"Did Ernest look much after his property—Clara's—when he was here?"

"He was over there two or three times: they are repairing the house, to let it. He rode to look at it the day after the ball; but he was not inclined to talk when he returned, and I did not hear much about it."

"Has he written since he went?"

"Yes, once."

"How does he think he shall like the place? Is it what he expected?"

"I hardly know. It was to Clara he wrote, and she never will tell anything. I asked her how he liked it and she said 'Very well.' I often do without knowing a thing rather than go to the trouble of pumping it out of her."

"Clara was always silent; but she will talk more when she goes out more, and gains confidence. Good night, my dear Agnes; your uncle will be coming up to bed."

Eva in going to that ball had not counted the cost. She knew that Ernest Clifton was married: she had accustomed herself to think of it; she had schooled herself to bear it. With her it had been no ideal: she had contemplated it in its naked reality, struggling against its bitterness, she believed with success; but until she saw Ernest enter the ball-room—his wife upon his arm—she did not know *how much* was yet unconquered. The shock of that one glance wrung her heart as she did not think it could again be wrung. Sick and giddy with the anguish, she clung to her husband's arm, and contrived, by the aid of that firm support, to slide unobserved into a seat. Once seated, she made a desperate effort to rally. For a few moments it was ineffectual; the sharp spasm at her heart, the choking pain in her throat, threatened to overwhelm her. Fortunately for her, some acquaintances met the Cliftons' party and intercepted its progress towards the head of the room where she was seated. They re-

mained for some time conversing with the dancers who were promenading round the room, the first dance being just ended. Summoning all her pride to her aid, with a struggle, whose success surprised even herself, she conquered her emotion; and by the time she was called upon for the trial she was able to command for herself seeming indifference.

For days after, Eva's spirit did not recover that mental conflict. Its effect was ever present, though no one could have guessed it: no duty was neglected, no demand on her attention unheeded, her husband missed no smile; but whether she went mechanically about her household occupations, whether she cheerfully entertained her guests, or silently sat in solitude at her work—whether smiling by her husband's side, or resting at midnight on his bosom, the same cold pain was at her heart—unbidden and unencouraged, but unbanishable—the spasm of that jealous pang with which for the first time she had looked upon *his wife*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WATCHMAKER'S.

THREE summer months glided quickly past. To Eva it was a term of constant occupation: occupation combined with interest; which, perhaps, is the best cure ever yet invented for a mind diseased from wounded feelings. Besides the parochial duties which she believed properly to belong to the sphere of a clergyman's wife, she wholly took upon herself the common cares of life.

More skilled in the practical labour than her book-learned husband, it secured to him more time for his higher calling, and spared his mind the distraction it must otherwise have to encounter, and the wear and tear of the petty annoyances and interruptions incidental to daily domestic existence. She kept the purse; better understanding the demands on it, and the means of making it stretch over them. She served as Charles' amanu-

ensis continually ; thus saving the time which must have been spent on the caligraphic employment for the intellectual. In her leisure hours she beautified and embellished her home by the exercise of her handicraft ; her pretty flower garden was bright and gay with blossoms, her porch filled with fragrant exotics, a present from Hilton Castle. Not only neatness and order but taste and elegance pervaded everything beneath her influence.

Nor did she neglect the claims of society ; which, but for her, would perhaps have been wholly overlooked by her less worldly-ambitious husband. They were much visited and invited out. Charles looked regretfully at his books, and grudged the time lost from them ; but Eva did not think it was lost. She thought it indispensable to establishing and maintaining a position in the sphere of their little world, not to sink into ciphers in society like the Edward Phillips'. She thought, too, it was necessary for her husband to be sometimes obliged to throw off his recluse habits, and mix with that world of which she aimed at his forming a brilliant atom. And though he would rather have remained undisturbed in the seclusion of that home in which he found perfect domestic felicity, he was too unselfish to immure, in accord-

ance with his hermit fancy, a spirit to which such retirement was not congenial; especially when he reflected how much of the deep happiness he enjoyed was dealt to him by her hand and shed upon him by her smile. Unmurmuringly then, laying aside his books and pen, he accompanied her whither she would. They dined out often; but though always invited to stay the night, whenever the distance would admit of its being done they invariably returned home to sleep. By that means the business of the next day was not broken in upon.

Charles's extensive parish took up almost the entire of his days. When he visited distant districts he sometimes rode (Eva had picked up a second-hand saddle for two pounds). Sometimes, when the nature of the ground to be traversed precluded riding, he walked; visiting as he went along; then Eva would drive to the farthest point of his journey and bring him home in the carriage. These long drives were great luxuries of meditation to Charles. He never spoke, nor did Eva ask him; she knew too well the value of his uninterrupted thoughts. With her hand clasped in his, leaning back in the carriage in blissful repose, the soothing influence of air and motion combined with perfect bodily ease, his contemplative powers were

free to wander through all the mazes of philosophy ; for Charles was not an imaginative man, and a period of pleasurable indolence, which to one of that dreamy temperament would have but induced the unprofitable phantasmagoria of reverie, was to him an opportunity—never neglected—of indulging in profound thought, seizing upon the truths, and connecting the links of science ; and many a lucid page which afterwards enlightened the world owed its existence to those peaceful drives.

Eva, during this time, regained much of her wonted light-heartedness. The healthful influence of occupation, the care for others' wants and happiness, the daily increasing affection she felt for her tenderly indulgent husband, the pride she took in his attainments, and the hope with which she looked forward to their distinguishing him, all contributed to restore her crushed affections into the right channel, and to raise her spirits, if not quite, nearly to their former elasticity. She wrote constantly to her mother, recounting every particular of her life, and Mrs. Desmond was solaced for her absence by the increasingly joyous, hopeful tone of her letters. She was quickly becoming happy, though sometimes a circumstance would

occur which reminded her that feelings are not extinct because they are dormant.

There was one house in the town which Eva had never entered. When Charles called there she had made some excuse for not accompanying him, and he went without her. This was the house of Mr. Andrews, the watchmaker, where Ernest had lodged previous to his marriage. Very mindful of not giving offence, Eva had determined to go there alone ; but through an unwillingness to raise emotions which she felt were now sinful as well as useless, the visit had been put off from day to day for many weeks. She often reproached herself for it, but still it was left undone.

Having by accident broken the crystal of her watch one day, she determined to take advantage of the excuse and take it herself to Andrews, to have the disaster repaired. Charles was out visiting and not likely to be home for some time. Putting on her shawl and bonnet, she started ; a mingled feeling of morbid curiosity and unwillingness to gratify it, at her heart.

It was a hot summer day, but as she neared the shop, one of those sudden heavy showers, often seen in the summer in this climate, came on without any previous notice ; a few immense

drops fell, and then followed the whole weight of the shower with drenching violence. Eva quickened her steps, and got into the shop none the worse. While Mr. Andrews fitted the glass to the watch she inquired for his wife.

"She is well, ma'am, thank ye," said the man ; and opening a door behind him he called out, "Sarah, here's Mrs. Stanhope inquiring for ye."

Mrs. Andrews immediately appeared pulling down the sleeves of her dress, which had been tucked up for the more convenient performance of some domestic function, and settling her cap straight on her head.

"How d'ye do, ma'am ; I hope I see you well. 'Tis a heavy shower, ma'am ; and, dear goodness, so fine one minute ago. May be ye'd walk in, ma'am, and sit down while ye're waiting."

"Thank you, Mrs. Andrews ; I did intend paying you a visit. I was not able to come the day my husband called on you."

"All in good time, ma'am. Very glad to see ye. Walk, in ma'am ; the parlour's cool and airy."

She led the way up the narrow stairs, Eva followed, and they entered the sitting-room, a good sized room, furnished as parlours in that class of houses usually are.

"This is the room Mr. Clifton had, ma'am, while he was with us, afore he got married ; he was pleased to say it was cool in summer and warm in winter: a nice, easy, contented gentleman he was. He was gone afore you came to the country, ma'am. Sit down, ma'am, you look tired." She wheeled an old leather easy chair towards her visitor. "Sit here, ma'am ; it's comfortable though it's old ; Mr. Clifton used to say so : he always sat in 't when he came in tired of an evening. Just where you are now, ma'am, by that little table, where he used to make his sermons and write his letters. Sometimes, when I'd bring up the tea, as often I did myself, I'd catch him asleep in 't, of a day he was very tired, or may be, wet. He never spared himself, not he: wet or dry he was for ever working ; though he hadn't the learning, as I hear 'em say, of the present minister, yer gentleman, ma'am. But, 'deed, every one was well satisfied with Mr. Clifton while they had him ; and so they ought : the like of him's scarce. This was his bedroom, ma'am, if you'd like to look into it. It is but a poor one, but it satisfied him : a nicer or a milder gentleman I never saw ; he was as humble as a child, though he was used to every thing of the best."

The loquacious old dame had opened a door leading out of the parlour on the opposite side from that by which they had entered. Eva, who had been sitting in the arm-chair still as death while her hostess thus ran on, now rose and went to the door to look in. It was a plain scantily-furnished room but clean and orderly ; a tent bedstead, with white dimity curtains folded up and laid upon it, was in one corner, and the rest of the furniture was ranged round the wall. It had a bare formal look like all unoccupied apartments : none of the familiar articles strewed about, to denote the habits of the occupant and assist the mind to identify the place with the person. We feel the want of this more particularly in a bedroom ; a bedroom is such a sanctuary of private life, every nook displaying some characteristic or employment of the owner, recognizable to those intimate with them. And yet, this barren room had once teemed with such. It was a type of Eva's heart, once so conversant with every trifle connected with Ernest in his every day life, now, scarcely possessed of the knowledge of his existence ! Eva felt all this as she silently gazed, then recollecting herself, she roused her spirits to say a few words of commendation.

"It seems a very pleasant room, Mrs. Andrews, and kept in very nice order, like all your house."

Mrs. Andrews smiled and bridled. "Well, 'deed, ma'am, 'tis very kind of you to say so, and I do try my best to keep things reg'lar. The girl I have now is not as tidy as I could wish: I have to look to things a good deal myself. When Mr. Clifton was here I was always up and down, seeing as how he had things comfortable. He so seldom found fault, it made one more partik'lar." Ernest's praises were a favourite and most fruitful theme with the good woman: she could have gone on for an hour without stopping; but marking Eva's eye rest on a blotting book on the table, she diverged.

"That was his paper-case, ma'am. He left it when he was going. I remarked to him, 'Sir,' says I, 'you haven't put up your paper case.' 'I shall not want it Mrs. Andrews,' says he, 'I've got a mighty fine one, a present. It will do for Andrews to write his bills on;' them's his very words, ma'am: so I kept it here ever since, out of regard of him."

Eva drew it towards her and opened it. It was well blotted with writing easily recognized as Ernest's heavy hand. His writing, being of

a peculiarly upright character, underwent little change from being thrown on the reverse. On one page was plainly discernible the address of a letter to Eva herself, while staying at Hislop. Here, then, he used to write those letters once so fondly cherished. She was seated in the very spot. Where were they now? The characters before her seemed ghosts of affection given back from the dead, so passed away it seemed.

“Mr. Clifton left you when—when he married,” said Eva, forcing herself to obey the necessity of saying something; but her lip quivered as it pronounced the last word.

“Ay, ma’am, that same marriage: I dunna was it a pleasing thing to him; but, it was a pity. Some say it was his uncle and aunt above at Hislop and his father between ‘em that persuaded him; more say he liked the money. She was an ordinary looking lady, and they say, not very ‘cute-like; ’twas in the family. Mr. Clifton was the last man in the world I ever thought would marry for money; he seemed to care so little for anything grand; and above all, when he liked another.”

Eva started. “Who did he like?”

“Well, ma’am, I dunna what her name was; she was a lady as was stopping with his father below

at Oakstone; from Ireland, and very handsome, as I hear, and a cousin of his own. To see the smile would be on his face when I'd bring up a letter from her! If I had fifty in my hand that was the one he would pounce on: I knew 'em well; they were always sealed with a little bird with a letter in its mouth. And when he'd be writing an answer, he'd always take it to the office himself, and never leave it on the table for the postman, like the other letters. He thought I did not mind him, but I did.

"Well, ma'am, he went down to Oakstone one time; himself and Mr. Oakley were there at the same time. They came back in the gig together, and when he came back I knew something ailed him. Every bit of pleasantness was clean gone out of his face, and it looking as dark as night, though as white as a ghost's. He passed me on the stair-head without so much as saying 'Good morning, Mrs. Andrews', a thing he never did afore. I was busy, and it was the girl went up to bring down his dinner—a fine fat fowl I had for him; I was always more partik'lar about his dinner of a day he came back from visiting, knowing as how he had nice things while he was out. 'Look here, missus!' said the girl; 'not a bit of

dinner has he ate.' Sure enough there was the chicken with one leg cut off and lying in the dish: not a mouthful had he swallowed, but one glass of beer. So I took up the chicken again, 'Sir,' says I, 'I think you forgot to eat your dinner.' He was sitting just where you are, ma'am, leaning his two arms on the table and his face buried down in 'em. 'I've had enough,' said he, raising up his head off his arms, but not looking round at all. 'Dear heart, sir,' says I, 'you 've had none.' 'I'll have no more. Take it away', says he, very short and cross-like. I knew something big ailed him, for he was always a most civil spoken gentleman. I took up his tea myself; there he was in the very same posture, seemed never to have stirred.

"Thinking as may be he'd leave the tea like he did the dinner, I made it myself and went into the bedroom on the pretence of fixing it, while the tea drew. He took no notice of me, so I poured out a cup of tea and left it and a muffin on the table beside him; just said 'There's your tea, sir,' and no more. After a while I went up for the things. Up he jumped the minute I went in, and in with him into the bedroom, and banged the door after him as he never banged a door afore or after while he was in the house. Says I to Andrews, when I went

down, ‘I dunna what ails Mr. Clifton, but he’s sorely put about.’ ‘May be he has the toothache,’ says Andrews, who thinks the toothache is the worst misfortune any one can have. ‘He hasn’t,’ says I; ‘there’s more on him than all the teeth in his head could put, and more’s the pity.’”

Shortly after, less than a fortnight, I believe, Andrews was sent for to Oakstone to repair the clocks, and nurse told him—nurse at Oakstone, ma’am, is first cousin to Andrews’ sister’s husband—nurse told him as how there had been a great row because Mr. Ernest was courting his cousin; and how his father was mad, and made Mr. Ernest drop it; and how the poor young lady herself was sent off to Ireland, though she was hardly able to get out of her bed. I heard folks say she was a real beauty; and, ’deed, if she was, Mr. Clifton must see a change in the one he has now. I never saw her except in church. She never came to see me while she was in Hilton, nor anybody as I could make out; himself often dropped in to see us and have a chat with Andrews, but she never came. Them that did see her say she was as stupid as she was ordinary.”

A sickly smile here crossed—it could not be

said to brighten—Eva's face. There is always something consolatory in hearing that those for whom we have been deserted are less attractive than ourselves. Mrs. Andrews continued—

"It was not many days after Mr. Clifton's coming back in that unfortunate way, that the postman gave me a parcel for him, and along with it a green paper, that he bid me make Mr. Clifton sign; a sort of receipt like that he'd got the parcel. As I was carrying it up, I saw it was from the same lady as used to send the letters. But very different he looked when he got it, to what he was used: he laid it aside and signed the paper without saying a word. A couple of nights after, or more (I dare say it was a week) I went up with a book some one brought him; the girl was out and I took up the message myself. He was sitting by the fire burning letters: his own letters, I knew the big black writing; the parcel I'd brought him was open on the table beside him; then I guessed she'd sent back his letters to him. He was looking very dark and sorrowful. I often saw him look that way after; never more so than the day afore he was married. When he got into the new carriage as came from Lunnon, to go up to Hislop, he turned

round as he got on the step, and when I saw his face, I thought of the night he was burning the letters. But, dear ma'am, you look very pale and done up like! I'm afeared ye're not well."

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Andrews, I am quite well," said Eva rising, "I think the shower must be over. I will go now." Her head swam and her limbs shook: she was obliged to sit down again.

"I do not know—I believe I am not quite well: I have walked too fast. If I had a glass of water."

"Certainly, ma'am: or if I might make so bold as to offer it, I've got most beautiful elderberry wine; if you'd take a glass, ma'am, it'd strengthen you."

"Not now, thank you, kind Mrs. Andrews, some other time; nothing but a glass of water."

The good woman bustled into the bedroom and out again with only a glass in her hand, there was no water there. She ran down-stairs and presently returned with it full of water. Eva was lying back in the chair. She held the glass, that glass from which Ernest had often drank, to the white quivering lips of her visitor. She untied

her bonnet, took it off, and bathed her forehead with some of the water; it revived Eva.

"Thank you, you are very kind and good: I am better now: I am sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Trouble! Don't speak of the trouble, ma'am; you 've been overdoing yourself that's what you 've been. Very careful you ought to be not to go so fast—critical times like. 'Tis n't with you like 'tis with strong people, sure ye 're as slight as a child; look at your hand!" She was holding one of Eva's long slender hands on her own spatular palm, kindly rubbing it with the other while she lectured.

Just then a tap came to the door and Andrews put in his head to say Mr. Stanhope was in the shop, and having heard that his wife was up-stairs he had sent to let her know he was there.

"Tell him she 's not very well, and ask him to walk up," said Mrs. Andrews.

"No, no, please do not: do not say anything to him of my being ill; it will only make him uneasy. I am much better; I will go to him." She tied on her bonnet.

"'Deed, then, ma'am, ye 're not fit to go; ye 're trembling like an aspen."

"I shall be better in the air. Thank you very much for your kind attention. I have been a troublesome visitor." She held out her hand with a sad grateful smile, and went down to join her husband. Her look struck him.

"Have you been ill, my dear?" he asked, in alarm.

"No; only a little faint. I was caught in the shower and walked too fast. Mrs. Andrews has been kindly taking care of me. She is a very good nurse."

"Deed, sir, and you'll want to take care of Mrs. Stanhope," said the eulogised lady, coming forward and curtseying; "she don't know the difference herself, but it won't do to be letting her over-exert herself in this way, for a little time to come." This she added with a look of matronly intelligence that brought a hot blush into Eva's pale cheek, as she hurried with her husband out of the shop.

"She's a beautiful, nice-spoken young lady, as innocent as a child," remarked the copartner of the watches to her husband when they were gone. "Very delicate like, though I 'spect there's reasons for that. She very nearly fainted off in the room

above, just from hurrying out of the shower. I never noticed how bad she looked. I was busy talking, and all of a sudden I looked up and she was like a corpse."

"May be you talked too much."

"No, I didn't; I was only just telling her about poor Mr. Clifton's misfortunes; made to marry that ugly-faced thing, and he liking an Irish lady, a real beauty, all the time."

"What! You oaf! Why, *she's* the Irish lady!"

"Who?"

"Mrs. Stanhope. She's his own cousin."

"Whose cousin?"

"Mr. Clifton's, the one that the row was about."

"You don't tell me so, Andrews!" said his wife, looking as if she had not quite made up her mind whether she would not have a downstairs edition of the fainting scene.

"Faith, I do tell you so; I couldn't tell you anything else. She was often here at the door in the Oakstone carriage, before herself and Mr. Clifton became foes. That very same brooch she had in her shawl to-day, he himself brought me to put a pin in: that was after he came to stop here; and he sat in the shop watching me all the

time I was doing it—what he never done while I was at a job for himself.”

“ Dear goodness me, what have I been and doing! What a mischief to be sure! I wonder, Andrews, you never told me.”

“ Begad, if I thought about it at all, I’d have thought you knew. The day I was down at Oak-stone last regulating the clocks, nurse was asking me about her; and said she did not go there at all.”

“ As sure as my name’s Sarah Andrews that’s what upset the creature, and not the walking at all. Nothing should do me but to tell how Mr. Clifton took on when he came back after parting with her.”

“ Likely enough: the less she hears about him now the better. He preferred gold to beauty, and I don’t think she need regret her own choice. He seems powerful clever, Mr. Stanhope does. A deal more so than Mr. Clifton’ll ever be.”

“ ’Deed, Andrews, I think Mr. Clifton did his duty as well as any minister could; he never stopped, late or early, wet or dry, and as to his sermons, I never heard one from him that I did not feel the better of.”

“ So you might, and still they not have the stuff in ’em that this man’s have. There’s as much

in one sentence of his as another 'd streal through a page ; and it's he can sift a subject to the bottom and argue both sides. Sometimes he produces every objection that could be made, and confutes 'em all. I expect he does that because the place is so infested with dissenters ; only he 's too moderate a man ever to say so. Oh ! he has a dale of knowledge in that head of his ! ”

Andrews was a member of the Mechanics' Institute, and was looked on as rather an oracle in matters of learning.

The object of his panegyric was meanwhile walking slowly home, looking with very unlearned concern at his wife's pale face. We are apt to feel unnecessary and even unreasonable dread of the loss of anyone whose death would be a pre-eminent misfortune to us—*vide* the anxiety over an only child ; so it was with Charles: looking on life as valueless, nay, insupportable without Eva at his side, he felt uneasy if her finger only ached, lest it should be the incipient spring of some of those strange unaccountable disorders which we hear of once in a way, that from small beginnings run through and poison the system, and, baffling science, end in death. Such things have been and might be again. When the heart creates an

idol, our fears of losing it magnifies every danger into fabulous imminence.

"I am much better, Charles, dear," said his wife, with an attempt at a smile, on seeing his anxious look. "Where are you going?"

"To take you home, in the first instance. I have to go and see a sick person about half a mile from the town; and I thought perhaps you would like to walk with me, when I sent for you."

"Perhaps I could; I feel so much better now."

"You shall not think of it. I can feel your arm trembling on mine. Don't you think, love, you had better have Mr. Davis to see you?"

"No, dear Charles, it was but a moment's faintness from quick walking or — something. The air has nearly restored me. Let me go on with you; please do!"

"No, Eva, I will not." They were at the parsonage gate and Eva had halted. "Come in, love! No pleading: I will not allow it. Go and lie on the bed to rest. I must not neglect seeing this sick woman: I am afraid she is in want; but I will hasten back. If you are not better then, I shall insist on having Mr. Davis sent for; if you are better, I shall scold a little about your tiring yourself in this way. Do as I tell you, my darling."

He kissed her tenderly; and left her at the door. Had he been a better doctor he would have taken her with him; fresh air and the obligation of exertion would have done her ailment more good than bed and Mr. Davis. Her room gained, she did what her husband bid her, lay down upon the bed; but she also did what he did not bid her—cried as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVALS.

IN the month of September there was always an annual horticultural show held in Hilton. It was supported by subscription, to which the Hilton family—or, as they were usually called in the neighbourhood, in contradistinction to all who lived but in houses, the “Castle family”—largely contributed. Fortunately for Hilton there was a rival town in the locality: a new town which had sprung up on an old borough; a thriving town, for the sand and water having been discovered to possess qualities admirably adapted to the manufacture of glass, several capitalists had come and set up factories there. The circulation of money soon alters the aspect of a town; large stores and furnaces quickly grew up on the edge of the river, the tumble-down houses of the old borough were replaced by new bright looking shops and the comfortable residences of master workmen. The

capitalists erected for themselves handsome villas outside the town, while long rows of small neat houses, built by them and rented by their operatives, now occupied the former dirty, uneven, town-cabin approaches to the old borough. In such a town as this, a new town, the creation of a new people, a democratic feeling is sure to exist. No old time-riveted ties between the lower orders and the aristocracy induce that veneration for rank which is found in agricultural districts, where landlord and tenant, the hall and the cottage, have been cementing a union of protection and dependence for generations.

In a new, manufacturing town it is each man for himself; at least, wherever there is talent sufficient to think of getting upward at all. The operative hopes to exchange his small tenement in the suburb for one of those substantial two-storied houses in the broad leading street, now occupied by a master workman; the master workman looks longingly at the pretty villa beyond—almost a country residence—and calculates his brains and their powers of accumulating capital, to enable him to enter on the business as a principal, be it ever so junior a one—everything must have a beginning.

A town such as this is a grasping, importunate town : a continually aggressive power to the old established claims and privileges of its elder relations ; crying halves at first, then trying to monopolize all. Ever ranting of the rights of its population, its wealth, its commercial influence ; and flouting at the decayed energies and poverty-stricken appearance of the “rotten old borough” its neighbour : all of which it attributes to its want of independence of spirit, and servile adherence to an antiquated good-for-nothing castle, and keeping in Parliament a prejudiced old aristocrat who cares for nothing but his own ease and rights ; instead of sending there an enlightened man of the people, who would know how to legislate for their interest and progressive requirements, without being withheld by the fear that they might by possibility encroach upon his own feudal prerogatives. And the old town, though it obstinately refuses to swallow the democratic pill prescribed for its resuscitation, looks on the new one, much as an elder sister, *a passée* beauty, may be supposed to do on the *début* of a fresh younger sister, who was but a child in the nursery when she queened the ball, and tries to hold with jealous tenacity the homage once voluntarily rendered to her, and

which would now fain bow to those more youthful charms.

The town of Newborough never rested. It wanted to have two out of the four quarter sessions held in it, and at last succeeded in obtaining the boon ; and immediately built a bridewell and a courthouse, large enough to put the old town-hall of Hilton into the dock. It fought for the county meetings and county courts, the dispensary and asylum balls, the cavalry meeting, the flower show, and everything else that was to be had ; arguing that each town should take its turn at nibbling the good things of the locality, as a preparatory step (though they did not say that) to the new one swallowing up all.

In arms, then, against the town of Newborough, the Castle family arrayed itself, and lent all its energies and all its influence to upholding the prior, if not more important, claims of Hilton ; which consequently had much more done for it than had its rival not existed. True that Newborough was one of the three returning boroughs, and its votes weighed heavily in the scale of election. But Lord Hilton knew perfectly well that, do what he would for Newborough, he could not command its votes. Sprung from the people, the capitalists would

warmly support the democratic member; the operatives vote for him, because their own sentiments and own interests coincided with those of their employers. It was, then, the Hilton policy to stand up for the interests of and shower their favours on the borough into which their castle gates opened, and which was peopled with—whatever their creed—staunch supporters of their family and the conservative cause. And as every boon accorded to the one town necessarily took from the other, the consequence was hostile opposition to the upstart which had reared itself up on the foundation of the old loyal town, which even in its early existence had been of later growth than Hilton, and consequently had borne the name of Newborough.

Gentry, that is the old established gentry, of a county generally side with the aristocracy. There is a kindred feeling between them—effect of long residence and the communication of generations. The Squire's father voted for my Lord's father, his grandfather hunted or shot with my Lady's grandfather, and the kindly feeling has descended. There is no envying, for they belong to a different class; no agitation or audacity would make the squire a noble, nor does he ape at being one.

The indefatigable struggles of the inhabitants succeeded in getting one dispensary ball held in the democratic borough ; but they were obliged to be contented with a democratic ball. The Castle family took no notice of it—did not appear to recognise its existence. The Hiltons of Weston Hall would not go because of their cousins at the castle not patronizing it ; the Earl of Lansdon's family did not come because they were not invited, as usual, to Hilton Castle, and they had no notion of coming forty miles and stopping at an inn to attend a dispensary ball in Newborough ; the gentry would not go because the aristocracy stopped away, and they had no idea of going only to meet the manufacturers and shopkeepers of Newborough. Even the democratic member was abroad with his bride : “he had married a wife and he could not come.” So the manufacturers and shopkeepers had the ball all to themselves ; and very little satisfaction the monopoly seemed to give them. What availed it that they had got up the ball “first rate, to astonish the weak minds of the Hilton humdrums,” had engaged a London band instead of the “old, jingling, cavalry one,” “sported a spread” instead of the “slop of tea” they were poisoned with at Hilton ; in short, dipped so

deeply into the subscriptions, that a mere nominal surplus was left for the benefit of the institution. What, I say, availed all this when they had nobody there but themselves? They had not even an opportunity of showing off their independent airs to the despised aristocrats. The female portion, especially, were discontented. Women love finery and grandeur—no matter what their politics; and a ball, to them, was a poor affair without nobility and gentry. Some pretty girls were always chosen as partners by the gentlemen. They liked to see the London fashions on the large party who always came in the Countess of Hilton's train, visitors invited purposely for the benefit of the ball. The old dames liked to talk of the Countess's turban, and to guess the probable value of the Duchess of Roxborough's satin; the young ones learnt how to do their hair and make their berthes for the next six months, by watching how Lady Jane's or Lady Mary's were done: an humble imitation at all events they could accomplish. In a word, the Newborough ball was a failure, and the Newborough people had sense enough to profit by experience, and when the time for the asylum benefit came, to lie close, let it take place at Hilton without opposition, and go there to enjoy it.

They applied for the cavalry meeting to be held at Newborough every second year. This application met with a flat refusal: Lord Hilton was the colonel, and could do as he chose. Then they tried for the flower show: that honorary member of the virtues, perseverance, they possessed in an eminent degree. At first they wanted two flower shows annually: one to be at Newborough in April, the other, as usual, in September at Hilton. No one made any opposition. Those applied to said, “Get one up by all means, if you wish to have it;” but no one would bind themselves to attend or to contribute. One said, “It is probable I shall not be here in April; I am always in London at that time.” Another, “Why I cannot subscribe to two, and I should not like to withdraw my mite from the old one which has always had it.” In fact, the April flower show threatened to be like the dispensary ball, all in the glass line. Not relishing that, the men of glass made a last effort to have it biennially; but Lord Hilton turned a deaf ear to all representations on the subject. So, though Newborough might have wide and straight streets instead of crooked narrow ones, and its river be spanned by handsome bridges instead of old ricketty ones; or, may be,

as in one instance at Hilton, a ford in the heart of the town ; though its population might be more enlightened and its orators more eloquent, it could not enlist the sympathies of the aristocracy, nor command their presence at its assemblies ; and still, Hilton in its gentility was not an unequal rival of its more wealthy and go-ahead neighbour.

It was September ; and the flower show, or more properly speaking horticultural show—for there figured fruit, prodigious turnips, prize carrots, and all other vegetables down to potatoes, boiled and unboiled—was fixed for the fifteenth of the month.

The Castle family invited a party of grandees—company traps, to secure for the show the attendance of the county gentry—some of whom always were invited, in their turn, to meet the big wigs.

Eva told her husband that she had long intended on this occasion to give a feast ; to see in return the people who had invited them out. A dinner, she told him, was impossible ; she had not servants or table appointments, but a lunch she thought she could manage : it could all be prepared beforehand ; and, as many people had to come a distance and must leave home early,

they would be glad enough of a lunch, and what convenience people they were always more likely to be pleased with. So she would ask everyone who had asked her: those who were going to the Castle, of course, could not come; others would refuse for some reason or other, and she had no doubt but that she could accommodate as many as she should have. All this she represented in a very coaxing tone to Charles, one evening, as she sat on his knee, according to her wont, before he went to his books. Charles kissed her, and told her she understood those things better than he did, and provided she did not tire herself, he did not care. Accordingly the invitations were sent out.

The resident clergyman was always expected to take a prominent part in the preparations and arrangements of the flower show. To Charles, then, were constant applications made; not a little to his discomfiture, for he had never seen a flower show in his life and did not know a flower from a weed. Eva tried to make her previous knowledge of the customs in force a substitute for her husband's ignorance, and her taste and judgment soon discovered her to be a most efficient help. She tried to make

it appear that Charles was the dominant spirit, that she only acted on hints which emanated from him; but some way people got to say, “Mrs. Stanhope recommends this way,” or “The parson’s lady thinks so and so would be the prettier arrangement.”

Eva was as busy as a bee: her hands were so full she scarcely knew what to do first. She had to prepare for her own company, help at the assorting and arranging in the bowling-green, where the show was to be held, and was pressed into the service of a holyhock pedestal surrounded by a dahlia crown, which was being manufactured at the Castle, for a centre ornament for the fête ground. She was invited to meet the bigwigs at the Castle; but she could not go, because of her own feast.

Eleven families out of the nineteen she invited accepted her invitation. She calculated she should have about three or four and thirty people; but, for fear of accident she determined to provide for more. She bought in the viands, made the sweets, hired some requisites from the hotel (her butler’s pantry not containing the means of furnishing from thirty to forty covers), and got forms from the school-house to seat the com-

pany. Everything that could be done the day before, she did. She did not lay the table, because to do so she must disturb Charles' books and papers, and she wished her whim to annoy him as little as possible; but she had everything in readiness for the next morning. She prepared a dressing-room for the visitors. By degrees she had been collecting furniture for a spare bedroom. She had everything but the bed; that was an expensive article, and must be waited for. But a pretty toilet table flounced with white muslin over pink calico, washhand-stands and their apparatus, and some chairs had been accomplished; and with the carpet off her own room, a new hearthrug, in which she invested seven and sixpence, and any little elegancies that could be spared from the rest of the house, she made quite a splendid dressing-room, and laughingly pulled her husband in to admire it. It was the contriver that Charles admired.

On the morning of the flower show, Charles awoke Eva at a very early hour, and asked if she should want him at the feast.

“To be sure, love! I could not have it without you,” she exclaimed, springing out of bed to see if the day were fine. The day was fine, so she

stole back into Charles' arms, and told him again that she could not do without him.

"I did not know I was so important a part of it before," he said. "How long will it keep me?"

"The show opens at half-past two, so I ordered luncheon at one. It is but a few minutes' walk to the bowling-green, and I should think an hour and a half would be enough to allow for all. But we shall not be out of the green until after five."

"But I need not stay, if I go there at all. I can come away and leave you with some one."

"Indeed, Charles, you cannot! You will be a great man there, going about awarding the prizes; the clergyman always is."

"Nonsense! my dear; I am not going to make an ass of myself. May be it is the worst flower in the place I should give the prize to. I will do no such thing."

"Well, darling," said his wife soothingly, "any way you must be there. It is considered an improving thing to the lower orders, and the clergy are expected to countenance and encourage it—always have done so."

"Then I must get up now. There are some sick people on the gorse mountain I must see to-day, so I had better lose no time."

"I will get up and have your breakfast before you go."

"No, no; it is not yet six o'clock. Stay where you are. I will get a crust of bread and a cup of milk in the pantry."

"Such a cold breakfast, Charles! I will have your tea ready in a few minutes."

"I wish my wife would learn to be obedient. Stay where you are. Where is your purse? I am out of money."

"Give me the dress I wore last night, my purse is in the pocket. How much do you want?"

"There are three families with sick in them: I shall want half a crown for each."

"Three half crowns! seven and sixpence! That is a great deal for a curate to give away in one day."

"They are cases of great distress; the people are very ill. In two of the families it is the father who is ill, and they have no one earning; in the other, the mother and three children are down."

"Would not they be fit objects for the sacrament money?"

"It has been all distributed. There is so much sickness just at present, the demands for relief are large. My Eva, we must not give feasts to the rich and leave the poor unprovided for."

"Here are two half-crowns, I have only two shillings more in silver; I think you will find six-pence in half pence on the dressing-table: or, perhaps the two shillings will do."

"No; I want half-a-crown. Sultan," he added with a smile, "must eat another sixpenny worth of grass."

This was a playful allusion to what he called Eva's favourite mode of retrenchment. The reader is aware that the glebe field was, from the first, destined to eke out Sultan's keep. Too small to admit of a cow being kept on it, its only tenant was a pig, for which it was much too large a provision; in the day time, therefore, Sultan was turned out for a few hours to share it with him. Once or twice, when Eva's coffers were low, on Ryan's coming to say Sultan's corn was expended, his mistress had replied, to Charles' great amusement, that Sultan must be made to eat more grass.

Before Charles went, he drew the curtain, and desired Eva take a sleep, to fit her for the exertion of the day; but no sooner did she hear the hall door shut after him than the disobedient wife got up, and hastened down-stairs to begin her preparations. Charles' table had to be cleared.

Eva did that herself ; and transported its contents with little disturbing into the corner of her store-room. By joining the ends of the two side tables they made one good long one, capable of seating, with forms, four-and-twenty people. This Eva selected as the principal table. The one on which they were in the habit of dining was placed parallel with it, and would accommodate, on a push, sixteen or eighteen. Ryan and his mistress laid them out between them, and Eva thought the lunch looked very handsome; no wonder then that Ryan and Norah thought so. There was a spiced round of beef, at the binding of which Eva herself had presided and in her anxiety to have it right, would have called Charles to help, only she thought he would do more harm than good. There was a turkey, several fowls and ducks, some pigeon pies, a ham, and two tongues. Mr. Oakley had sent three partridges, and there was an unlimited supply of mutton chops, which were to come in hot and hot. Several cakes, prettily ornamented, on high stands, a profusion of sweet dishes, Eva's own manufacture, and fresh fruit from her garden, closed the bill of fare.

In the centre of the grand table was a figure of Pomona, with a basket of most luscious looking

peaches on her head, from which depended light spiry sprays of blossomed creepers ; in her arms, embedded in green foliage, were a quantity of most beautiful grapes, and her limbs were draped with the cool looking branches of the ice plant. The grapes had been a present from Lady Hilton, who, having heard of the feast, good naturedly contributed a luxury not easily attainable in a country place. The day before Eva had wreathed and crowned with these grapes a plaster of Paris statue which she had for a lobby light ; but when it was done, it looked so perfect a representation of the infant Bacchus, that Charles shook his head and disapproved. So Bacchus was disrobed, and the drapery re-adjusted to suit a goddess ; a shallow, oval workbasket of Eva's, filled with peaches, being glued on his head, quite changing and feminizing his appearance. On the other table was a beautiful bouquet, which had come with the grapes, in a hired epergne ; one of those that used to figure at the Hilton public balls, but so disguised by Eva's taste, that its most familiar friends might sit at table with it and never recognise it.

The little room beyond the dining-room was, on this occasion, made to do duty as a sort

of green-room to the feast ; there, were spare table requisites laid out—some replenishing dishes, and bottles of ale and wine, in case they might be wanted—and behind the door was arranged the means of washing up any articles that might numerically run short.

A large party in a small house with a meagre establishment involves much work ; and so busy was Eva that she forgot to breakfast, until a strange giddiness in her head reminded her of the fact. Charles was detained long. Everything was done, Eva dressed and in the drawing-room, when he returned.

“ How late you are, dearest ! Come up-stairs at once. I have a cup of nice broth warming for you. I will bring it while you dress. You have little time enough.”

She followed him up with the broth. “ I have brought you a bit of toast, dear, for you will not be able to eat half enough of lunch, with attending to the people.”

“ Thank you, my own angel. But how pale you are ! You have tired yourself. Why will you, Eva ? You look so fragile.”

“ It is this white dress makes me look so. I think a clear muslin and blue ribbons always

gives one a delicate look. Besides, you know I am always pale. Hurry, love, and dress; I expect them every moment. There are your cravat and collar on the bed. Here is a new waistcoat—I have aired it. Brush your hair a little more to the front. That will do; you look very nice now."

"I have not got a pocket-handkerchief: they are all dirty."

"I will give you one of mine; I have some large lawn ones. Let me put some scent on it. Come down, now: and remember, Charles, you are to take Mrs. Bloomfield out to luncheon first: she is an Honourable, you know."

"How shall I know when to go?"

"It will be announced. Ryan understands about it."

"Hem! if he does it is more than I do."

The Cliftons had never met Eva but that once at the ball. They had been invited to Mr. Griffin's to meet her; but they were engaged to spend that week at Hislop, consequently saw nothing of her. They had not called at the parsonage, though always intending it. Clara's visit was prolonged much beyond what they expected it would. Her house was slow in preparing, and Ernest did not

complain of being lonely without her. When she at last left, one of the carriage-horses had fallen lame, and confined them, except for short distances. There was besides, perhaps, some little inward reluctance: Eva's manner, graceful and courteous as it was, at the ball, had rather chilled them. There is an awkwardness in meeting those whom you know are not cordial to you. So time had passed on, until it drew so near the flower show, they thought they might as well wait for that day. There would be less formality in paying a visit on a day of public excitement; the popular subject engrosses attention and furnishes conversation, to the exclusion of private affairs. It was, therefore, agreed that Mr. Clifton and his three daughters should go and call at the parsonage on that day.

"I dare say Eva will think of our lost darling when she sees little Nan alone," said Mr. Clifton, sorrowfully, to Agnes the evening before the fifteenth.

"Perhaps so," said Agnes, "but Eva's feelings are so changed."

"Could hardly be, I should think, towards that little angel who was so fond of her."

"I don't know. I fancy estrangement so com-

plete as Eva's extends to everything connected with the family. I cannot think she has any interest in us. Pleasant as her manner was at the ball, it grieved me to the heart; I seemed not a shade more to her than Clara or any one else: we that were once such friends! that gay company smile instead of the old heart-lit manner."

Agnes' eyes filled.

"That unfortunate attachment of Ernest's has caused much that was vexatious, one way or other. The last man in the world one would have expected to give way to a fancy in that rash way! His marrying Eva was out of the question; she will never have a penny except the 500*l.* that is left of her mother's fortune, and not that, if that father of hers can contrive any means of making away with it: still, money is not everything, and I could wish that Ernest was unmarried yet."

"So could I," said Agnes, decidedly.

"When this marriage was first mooted, I did not believe Clara to be the nonentity she is: the Herberts over-rated her sadly; puffed her up out of all reason."

"I always knew they were doing that; but I thought Ernest could judge for himself. If he

thought he could be happy with her, her money was a great object, as without getting a large fortune, you know you have often said, he never could keep up this place."

"He might have got a sufficient fortune with a more companionable person; Chewton Deane did. I have heard they thought of Clara for him until they saw her; and Ernest is such a handsome, worthy fellow!" Mr. Clifton spoke with a father's pride.

"Yes; but Ernest would never look out for a fortune like Mr. Chewton Deane did. He fell in love with Eva, I do believe, without knowing he was doing so. Clara he married because it was done for him by his friends; he never would have married her if he had been let alone. And as to looking about him for some girl with a sufficient fortune, laying himself out to win, and then marrying her, he would never do it: you know, papa, he would not."

"I suppose not," replied her father, with a sigh. "Happy the man who has no children."

The Herberts were not in the habit of attending the flower show regularly. Hilton was twenty miles from them; too great a distance for frequent travelling. Once they had been invited to the

Castle. They went then, as may be supposed, and two or three times they had gone from Oakstone. However, as they had made up their minds to call on the Stanhopes, they determined to kill two birds with one stone, and go down on the fifteenth. Neither they nor the Cliftons knew of Eva's grand feast, or, of course, not being invited, they would have been careful to stay away.

CHAPTER VI.

“THE PLAGUE OF RELATIONS.”

EVA's company were assembled in the parsonage drawing-room; very pretty that gay lightsome room looked in its holiday attire. The day was hot, but there was a light summery breeze, and the sashes of the oriel window were open to admit it, as it came wafted and perfumed over the beds of geraniums and heliotropes in the little lawn in front: the muslin curtains were closed, to soften the glare of warm light without excluding the air, and Eva, in her cool pretty dress, looking fragile indeed, but very beautiful, was gaily chatting to every one, as she glided through her guests, with that perfect tact which suffers no one to feel unhonoured. Even Charles seemed to throw off his habitual preoccupied manner, and came in a very efficient second to his fair wife's admirable first; the deep full tones of his voice might be heard with unusual

animation mingling with her silvery laugh, as, for her dear sake, he exerted himself to play the host. The party numbered thirty-three, both the drawing-room and the recess beyond it were quite full. All were merrily talking and laughing, when the door opened and Mr. Clifton and his daughters entered. They were not a little astonished at the sight they encountered. Eva had the advantage of them. She had been standing so as to catch a view of the approach from the window, and without being seen through the muslin curtains, had seen them come up to the door. For a moment the same quick spasm beat at her heart that any vivid recollection of Ernest always produced. It was but momentary; before they entered she was quite herself again. She advanced to meet them with the same smiling, unembarrassed air that she had received her other guests: no one could have guessed but they were expected.

“This, I fancy, must be Nannie, though she has outgrown my recollection,” she said, lightly, holding out her hand to the child after having shaken hands with the elder ones.

Agnes cast one regretful look at the careless salutation; there was no saddened remembrance of

poor little Arlette in it. As Eva spoke, Ryan announced luncheon. With a glance, which was subtilely carried from himself to Mrs. Bloomfield, his wife helped Charles.

“Mr. Clifton, be so kind as to take Mrs. Griffin in to lunch.”

She moved away to pair others. Mr. Clifton was sorely puzzled. Vexed beyond measure at finding he had joined a party who evidently must have been invited, unwilling to do anything so pointed as to withdraw at the very moment of his entrance, in the unpleasant predicament of being in close proximity to the lady who was expecting him to hand her into the dining-room; awkward, annoyed, and confused, he found himself offering his arm to Mrs. Griffin because he really did not know how to get out of it. The others quickly followed, cutting off all retreat. Eva on Mr. Bloomfield’s arm came last.

The lunch was what may be styled a very successful entertainment. It had been a convenience to those who attended it, was considered a polite attention on the part of the Stanhopes, and far exceeded in its extent and arrangement what anybody expected could have been accomplished at the parsonage. Every one (at least

of the *invited* guests) was in high good humour and determined to enjoy themselves, and all were gaily sustaining their part..

The statue of Pomona met with universal admiration. Mr. Bloomfield and Mr. Griffin were assuring Eva that it ought to be transported to the bowling-green, where she would undoubtedly carry off a prize. Eva laughingly related the history of its first character, and Charles' clerical dread of his lunch having the credit of being a bacchanalian feast: the merriment was high, Charles good humouredly joining in the laugh against himself, when the door behind him unexpectedly opened, and the thin prim figure of Mrs. Herbert, followed by the antithesis of her husband's, entered on the scene. They were not aware that they were not entering the drawing-room, for Ryan, believing them to be expected guests, showed them in without remark. Their surprise at the scene was depicted on their countenances. If Eva felt any agitation it could only have been surmised from her deepened colour. Rising from her seat at the head of the table, she passed down the room and received them with light courtesy.

“ We can find a seat for you here, I think,”

she said in a soft polite tone to her aunt, at the same time making room for her at the foot of the table. “Charles, you will take care of Mrs. Herbert.”

“I have lunched, Eva,” said Mrs. Herbert; but Eva had turned away to seek a place for her uncle at the other table.

“Mr. Herbert shall have my place, Mrs. Stanhope,” said Mr. Bloomfield, rising; “I have lunched, and lunched most heartily.”

“Do not stir, Mr. Bloomfield,” said Eva, quickly; “pray do not: there is room here. Perhaps, Agnes, you would kindly sit a little higher: there is quite room for all. Here are some hot mutton chops coming in. Bring them here, Ryan; or do you prefer something cold? That is a pigeon-pie, I think, opposite to you.”

“Thank you, Eva, I think I will try this pie first. It looks very nice; you seem to have got all the good things of the world here,” and he looked around with the complaisance of a gourmand.

With a slight bow, Eva passed back between the tables to her seat; as she went along, looking after guests on both sides, seeing that they were provided for, and pressing them with courteous

hospitality to partake of delicacies : for Eva's feast was not grand enough to have everything handed round by servants wholly independent of all cognizance of the host and hostess, according to the most approved fashion, and she supplied the deficiency herself ; thereby making much more sociability.

At many grand dinners I have been at in England, my time was so taken up in saying, "No ; thank you" to the interminable rotation of dishes which were presented to me (and to have partaken of a sixteenth of them would have involved apoplexy) that I have scarcely been able to address my next neighbour.

"Mr. Griffin, may I trouble you to relieve Pomona of some of that load upon her head ; Mrs. Carterwaite would like a peach."

"I could not think of it, Mrs. Stanhope. She must go to the show."

"Oh, do not spoil her for me," said Mrs. Carterwaite.

"Take her to the show ; she must go to the show as the representative of ancient mythology," said several voices.

"We cannot spare her from modern gastronomy," said Eva reaching over and taking some

bunches of grapes from the figure, which she carried to the other table. The work of despoliation once begun, the goddess was quickly rifled of all but her floral decorations.

Once during the lunch Eva thought of Mr. Oakley and looked to see where he was. He was at the smaller table, beside Myra Clifton, whom he had handed in. When she saw that no one took anything more, Eva rose and said,

“Perhaps you ladies would like to come into the other room; it is cooler: we need not disturb the gentlemen.”

They went; some upstairs to re-arrange their bonnets; some into the flower garden, strolling through Eva’s pretty beds; some into the drawing-room to petition Eva to sing for them.

She had just finished one song, when the gentlemen came to remind them that their day was not to be ended there.

Neither the Cliftons nor Mrs. Herbert had been able to catch Eva’s private ear for a moment, her time was too much occupied with her guests. Mr. Clifton, feeling very uncomfortable at being there at all, after watching ineffectually for some time for an opportunity of inviting her to Oakstone, hurried his girls away, trusting to see her at the show.

"Going so soon," said Eva, as they came up to take leave, "I should hardly think the green will be open."

"By the time we are there, I dare say, it will be," said Mr. Clifton; "I shall see you again, Eva."

Eva smiled and bowed; there was nothing in either smile or bow that said she cared whether he did or not.

"You are coming to the green?" said Mrs. Herbert, who was among the last who stayed.

"I shall follow you."

There was that in the smile and bow this time that precluded any offer of being waited for.

Agnes watched for her coming; watched perhaps for others beside Eva. Leaning on her husband's arm, a large black lace shawl over her white dress, and a beauteous little transparent bonnet, white, with blue tipped feathers and ribbons to match her dress, Eva came: Mr. Oakley walked on her other side. Lady Mary, quickly leaving the booth where the Castle party were standing grouped, hastened up to her and said, joyously—

"Mrs. Stanhope, the crown has got a prize; we may thank you for that."

Eva modestly disclaimed all the pretension to being the earner of the prize, but she accompanied Lady Mary towards their handiwork.

“Mrs. Stanhope, where is your lazy husband?” said Lord Hilton, coming up; “he ought to have been here an hour ago; I trusted to you to make him. Why, Stanhope! we are at a stand-still for want of you: do come with me; half these flowers are unprized yet.”

“Then I had better go too, my lord,” said Eva, laughing, “if it is only to mind that Charles does not adjudge the prize for pelargoniums to one of these plates of dahlias.”

“Come with me, Mrs. Stanhope,” said Lord St. John. “I want to show you the thing best worth looking at here.”

“I cannot go now, Lord St. John; my husband’s character is in danger, and I must not let him out of my sight.”

“You need be in no alarm for my character, Eva,” said her husband. “I am not going to pretend to knowledge I do not possess.”

“No,” said Lord Hilton, “you possess too much for that; but come along, and just give us your countenance. There are two professional judges here; all we have to do is to sanction their

awarding. The people will be satisfied it is all impartial if the parson is by."

Eva's relatives saw no more of her that day. She remained in the Castle party and went about with them: not that she overlooked any less distinguished acquaintance; she stopped and spoke cordially to every one she knew, for never was any one less open to the imputation of being puffed up by her company. Mr. Clifton, too shy and proud to go near the Hiltons unless they sought him, was obliged to postpone his intended invitation. With Mrs. Herbert he had a whispered colloquy regarding the unfortunate *contretems* of the lunch; he was still more annoyed when he found that she too had come in ignorance of it. Eva must have thought it rained relations. Very little he slept that night: his first remark to Agnes next morning was of wonder that Mr. Griffin had not told him of having been invited to the Stanhopes, as it appeared he had received a formal note a week before.

"I do not know, papa," replied Agnes, "but I think people are shy of speaking to us of the Stanhopes: I have observed it ever since the ball. Before then, Mr. Griffin was always talking of them; now he never names them,

and I see that where they are invited, we are not, and *vice versa*. ”

“ I am desperately annoyed that we went there yesterday ; it actually kept me awake last night. We must invite them here immediately.”

Agnes, too, had passed a wakeful night. She had never once had speech of Mr. Oakley. It was the second time Myra had had him to talk to instead of her : she felt very uncomfortable. Formerly, Eva would have been the haven she would have sought to shelter her doubts in ; hers would have been the sympathy to soothe them, and far better than all, the help to befriend her ; now, the most sanguine hope could not delude her with the idea that Eva would lend a helping hand. Agnes could scarcely think that, however defensible her conduct, she could cast every breaker before the bark of Eva’s happiness, and when it was wrecked, expect her, in sight of its shivered timbers, to guide the helm of her own into safety. If the lifting of Eva’s finger could have gained for Agnes Mr. Oakley’s hand, that finger would not have been lifted : if the same action could have prevented her obtaining him, neither would it have been done.

Nor were Mrs. Herbert’s sensations at all

agreeable, as, reclining on the cushioned back of her brougham, she retraced the road to Hislop. At their meeting, her relation towards Eva had not been by any means what she wished. She had conned over this interview many times: in her own mind she had rehearsed it. She had intended her manner should be cold and dignified, but forgiving; perhaps patronizing was nearer the mark. She expected Eva's, even if distant, to be shy and embarrassed; on the contrary, its careless *nonchalance* and unchecked gaiety were a source of great discomfiture to her. If Eva had been even cold and offended: anything to make Mrs. Herbert of importance; but instead, her visit seemed to sit so lightly on Eva's mind that she did not give it a second thought. In her fancy picture she had portrayed herself as being received in a plain, unpretending, little drawing-room, such as she had supposed would belong to Hilton parsonage, and to have seen no one but the curate and his wife, to whom she intended to comport herself as I have said: instead, she found herself intruding on a large, gay party, who were partaking of a handsome entertainment, of which Eva was the head and the star, and very innocent of heeding how the

new comer comported herself. The elegance of the house and garden struck her forcibly. She began to suspect the Stanhopes were richer than she thought.

Though Mrs. Herbert was so very fearful of any less wealthy relative settling near her, her feeling at Eva's prosperity was not altogether an agreeable one. Perhaps had Eva been the cordial, loving niece she once was, the feeling might have been less, or, had she been in any way dependent on her aunt for patronage; but Eva's position was taken wholly independent of her relations. Mrs. Herbert had always been accustomed to look on Eva as secondary to herself. It was not, therefore, without jealousy that she saw her admitted into the Castle party with as much familiar cordiality as if she were one of themselves. Independent of her husband's talents, her own beauty, grace, and evident popularity procured for her a distinction not shared by her relatives. In short Mrs. Herbert felt that Eva had the best of it, and could afford to dispense with the attention she had intended to bestow so niggardly.

The evening of the flower show, Charles Stanhope and his wife dined on broiled turkey's

legs, some of the remains of the feast. Charles remarked that Eva looked more than usually pale, and eat little at dinner: he observed it to her, and made her drink a glass of wine. Then, as the room was still as the luncheon party had left it, and uncomfortable to sit in, they went into the drawing-room to pass the evening; which was not their custom when alone. Charles seated himself in a luxurious arm-chair and was taking out a book, when Eva came up to him and pushed it away, her face looking anything but happy.

“Not content to leave me the evening after my giving you the whole day,” he said, a little reproachfully, but drawing, her on his knee. To his great surprise (for he had never seen her give way thus before) she laid her head down on his shoulder and began to cry.

“Eva, my darling! My precious love, why is this?” Eva wept on.

“What is the matter, darling?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing! my love?”

“Nothing, Charles; I am only foolish.”

“You are never foolish, Eva. Something has vexed you: tell me, dearest, what it is.”

“Nothing, indeed, Charles. Don’t be vexed

with me; I know I am very silly. It was only all those people coming that worried me.”

“Your visitors! Have they tired you? I was afraid they would; but you seemed to take so much pleasure in the idea, I could not bear to thwart you.”

“No, no, not them; I liked that. It was all those relations who came and spoiled everything.”

“Oh!—I did not remark that they spoiled anything, dear.”

“They did. It was not a bit gay or pleasant after they came. The Cliftons were bad enough, but the Herberts finished all,” she cried continuously.

“Do not cry, love. You will tire yourself still more. I really think you are mistaken. I did not see that they made the least difference in the party; the people seemed to me to enjoy themselves all the time they were here. They may have made you feel less pleasant, because you do not like them; but it is over now, love: don’t cry about it. I hope they will come no more, if it is to vex you in this way. Don’t worry yourself, Eva, or I shall be vexed: think of something else,” he continued, finding she did not cease weeping; “think of one whose love will

never change; who loves you better every day; who, if he could help it, would never leave one thorn upon your path; and think”—here he stooped his head until his lips touched her cheek, and whispered—“think of another love that is opening to you.”

This was the first time that Charles had ever alluded to a new era which was approaching in Eva's life: she did not even know whether he was aware of it, for he had never taken any notice of Mrs. Andrews' hint. She turned her hot face in towards his shoulder, and soothed by his caresses, lay hushed and still.

CHAPTER VII.

CIVILITIES.

THE curate of Hilton's feast was quickly followed by several invitations for him and Eva to spend days with the surrounding families, who had either partaken of it or been invited to it. Among them came one to the houses of each of Eva's relatives.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert were sitting in the drawing-room at Hislop awaiting the arrival of the post-bag; that diurnal piece of excitement so eagerly watched for in most country houses, where it often constitutes the sole excitement of the day. It was rather late on the day in question. Mrs. Herbert was sitting even more than usually upright, like a person to whom some of the component parts necessary to repose were still wanting, and who could not settle down tranquilly until they had acquired them; more than once she

glanced at the time-piece over the fireplace, and wondered what had delayed the bag.

Mr. Herbert lay back in his easy chair, resting the poll of his head upon its upper ledge, which just reached high enough for the purpose, his elbows on the arms, his hands with their fat fingers interlaced, reposing upon the adipose protuberance whose aldermanic proportions had had so prejudicial an influence on his ecclesiastical progression. Between his wife's impatient remarks, he closed his eyes and opened his mouth, while his nose emitted a sound which tended to excite suspicions that he was dealing a little in the commodity, which, in our early days, we have been taught to look upon as so very reprehensible in the sluggard. Very easy that plethoric gentleman seemed about the delay; perhaps was not sorry for any chance which procrastinated interruption from his enjoyable siesta. At last Hodson entered with the bag, took the key from a little china box upon the mantelpiece, and unlocking it, handed the bag to Mrs. Herbert, who proceeded briskly to draw out the letters and divide them.

“Mine will keep,” remarked her husband, glancing through his fan-spread packet, as one does through a hand of cards, to learn its contents;

then leisurely opening the *Times*, he lay back and prepared to read the leading article at his ease: but he was not long left to repose.

“Read that, Edward!” proceeded from Mrs. Herbert, in one of the high keys of her voice with a good deal of sharp introduced, as she handed him the first note she had opened. It was an elegant looking note, written in a delicate though free hand, upon fair satin paper embossed with a crest and initials. It ran thus—

“MY DEAR AUNT,

Mr. Stanhope and I feel much obliged for your polite invitation, which we regret it is not in our power to accept. I must not neglect this opportunity of apologizing for our being unable to return your and Mr. Herbert’s visit, as Mr. Stanhope considers the distance too great for our horse. Yours truly,

“EVA STANHOPE.”

“Humph!” was Mr. Herbert’s ejaculation, when he perused it.

“What do you think of that note, Edward?” said his wife.

“It admits of but one construction; that they won’t come.”

"I am not asking you that; any one can see what is in it. What do you think of the way she has declined?"

"That it is very succinct."

"Ugh! I don't think, after that, Eva can expect me to take any further notice of her."

"I do not think she wishes it; this note says plainly she'll none of us."

"I wonder whose loss that will be."

"I suppose she thinks it is none to her; if they are in the habit of giving such luncheons as we got there the other day, I shall think them rather a loss to us when we go to Hilton. I never ate such lobster salad as I did there."

"There are plenty of places to lunch besides the Stanhopes."

"Faith, I don't know where they are, unless the hotel; and you pay for it there, and get it bad. I wonder did Eva make that salad herself?"

"To be sure she did. I am sure she has not a cook that could do anything of the kind."

"I wish we had got her to make one, while she was here: it was first rate. May be she will make up with us yet."

"For my part I never could make out what she

fell out about," and Mrs. Herbert turned to her other letters with a mixture of stubborn bitterness and regretful discontent upon her countenance, which gave an impression that some inward monitor was giving her a hint to supply the ignorance she professed.

To Agnes Clifton's invitation, Eva returned a less curt, though equally decided refusal ; but, in her letter, she expressed a hope of some time having the pleasure of returning their call : a pleasure so easily procurable, that its postponement led one to suspect its felicity must be dubious ; particularly as Eva had perfect command of her equipage, and drove out a great deal.

It was a pastime, for it can hardly be called an exercise, she took pleasure in ; and she contrived to make it a great saving of time and exertion to Charles. His sick parishioners, also, often reaped advantage from it ; for when they were recovering, and unable to walk, Eva frequently called in her carriage, to take them for a drive into the pure country air : more than one sturdy dissenter was won over to the church by the urbane sympathy of the curate's wife, when neither the curate's grave lectures nor his eloquent preaching could succeed. Old Mrs.

Andrews was indulged with frequent airings. She had a violent attack of influenza, which left her so weak, that, for a long time, she was unable to walk ; and, as being in the air was essential to strengthen her, Eva, whenever she could, called for her to have a drive ; so winning the old lady's heart, that she lamented more than ever her paragon, Mr. Clifton, not having her for a wife, notwithstanding Andrews persisting that Mrs. Stanhope was better off as she was—“for this was a deal cleverer 'un.”

Mr. Clifton the elder—the lunch he and his had eaten at the parsonage, still sticking in his throat—now essayed to pay off the gastronomic debt by sending a present of a large ham of his own curing to the Stanhopes ; but shortly afterwards, Eva sent to Hungerford market for a turbot and lobsters, that fully equalled the ham in value, and on their arrival forwarded them to her uncle, with a note the counterpart of his own. There was no use in trying to pay a compliment where it was returned in such guise ; so he was obliged, though very unwillingly, to stomach the lunch.

CHAPTER VIII.

GRUB-STREET.

As the theological work which Charles had been engaged on before his marriage, drew near its conclusion, the means of publishing it became a subject of discussion between him and Eva. A sum such as would be required for the purpose, it would be impossible to spare out of their income. After striking on various expedients, all of which they afterwards discovered some good reason for abandoning, they determined to take the work to London, and try to dispose of the copyright to some publisher there ; a task, the full arduousness of which neither was conversant enough with Grub-street to realize. Meanwhile, a thought struck Eva, which she communicated to no one. Bolting her door to secure herself from discovery, she pulled from under her bed a box which had not been unpacked since they left Ireland, and from among a heterogeneous collection of valuables it contained, drew forth the

manuscript of the unfinished tale she had been writing at Glenmore, and began to look it over.

In the stir of subsequent events she had forgotten much of what it contained, and she was pleased to find with how much interest and zest she perused it. She determined to finish the story, and try to make something of it. She could not command much time in the day, but she could always calculate on two hours of the night; the time which intervened between her retiring to bed, and Charles' following. Knowing her husband would not sanction the loss of rest if he were aware of it, she made arrangements to keep him in blissful ignorance. A small table with a drawer in it was placed by her bed; on this the candle stood, while Eva wrote with her portfolio on her knees, as she sat up in bed; and at the sound of Charles' step on the stair, the extinguisher was popped on the candle, and the manuscript into the drawer, with a dexterity which never suffered the poor deceived husband to discover the fraud.

Though Eva could not find time to write during the day, she had plenty of opportunities for thinking; which she did not neglect to make use of. While she sat at her work, seemingly

intent on the intricacies of embroidery or crochet, her busy thoughts were weaving the pages which were to be committed to paper at night. She now never found the evenings dull after Charles went to his books ; she enjoyed the silence which gave her so much time for thought. Her sewing never interfered with, or distracted it ; rather the reverse. The reality of a positive occupation often assists to call back the rays of fancy, which are wandering through mazy, shadowy regions, only partially impinging the broken fragments they float among, and to concentrate them on the one subject, which, perhaps, they may illumine. People imagine it is an easy thing for any one who has a mind, to think. No doubt it is to some : to the practical and sober man of business, who has tangible matter of thought, his goods on the one side, his money bags on the other ; to the trained logician, who has schooled his mind never to admit a thought that he cannot father upon reason ; to the commonplace mind, which thinks of commonplace things ; but to the poet and the novelist it is a different thing. The very attribute which has made them fictionists, militates against steady, continuous thought. They cannot expect that the winged steed they have mounted will trot soberly along

the road, and at the pace they wish : many a wild and fruitless chase it will lead them. They cannot say to imagination, “ go so far, and no farther : ” irresistibly they must follow when it leads. Any one who has ever written a poem or a work of fiction will, I think, remember how in their airy flights through that world which their fancy has generated, very much of the impossible has fleeted through their minds, transient and immaterial, as light clouds upon a summer day ; and how much condensed labour it took to cull from their airy shapes all that could be made available, and to reduce fancy to the bounds of reason. With all her precautions, Eva often found when she took up her pen at night, that many of the visionary attitudes her heroes and heroines had assumed in the kingdom of fancy, and which had seemed pleasing and attractive enough while there, would not bear the positive and disenchanting process of caligraphy.

But at last the tale was completed, without Charles having ever discovered that she was engaged upon it ; and she packed it up in the bottom of her trunk. A clergyman, who was on a visit at the castle, having kindly offered to undertake any occasional duty which might occur for a

week, and should Charles be detained in London, to perform the services on the following Sunday, the author and authoress started for the metropolis; where neither of them had ever been before. They took lodgings for a week in the Strand.

The day after their arrival, with many injunctions from his wife not to be downcast at refusals—receptions which most authors have at first to calculate on—Charles went forth with his manuscript, to dispose of it. Eva had intended to set out with hers as soon as he was gone, but she afterwards began to think, that perhaps she might encounter him at some of the publishers; and as, until her tale was pronounced to be thought, by some competent authority, worth publishing, she felt more shy of Charles seeing it than any one else, she determined to wait until he should first have disposed of his business.

Notwithstanding his wife's admonitions, Charles returned to dinner very much crest-fallen. No one would buy his book. The old tale, “Very clever, no doubt, sir; but would not sell.”

“Very learned, great research; but the subject too dry to be popular.”

“Heavy work, sir! few read so deeply. Would remain on hand.”

"In short," said Charles, "if it had been of less worth it might have sold easier." Eva talked cheerily: spoke of unsucces as a matter of course at first; adduced innumerable instances of the difficulties which had attended the early exertions of authors, whose acknowledged talents afterwards raised them high in the literary scale. She began to conjecture where it would be best to take the book on the morrow.

"I do not think there is any use trying any others," said Charles. "I tried a dozen to-day. When they heard I wanted to sell it they all declared off at once. Some would not even look at it. If it had been a begging petition they could not have seemed more afraid to touch it."

"No matter, love; others may buy: and if they do not, you must publish it yourself."

"Where would I get the money?"

"We will make it out, dear: I have a little by me. We will try at any rate; there is great virtue in trying."

Charles shook his head. "I was going to propose returning to-morrow; it is but wasting money to stay here."

"We have the lodgings for a week; at all events we will stay that time, and try what can be

done. You would not be so downhearted, Charles, only it is your own book. It is but what every author has to encounter: and you are such a stranger here, they know nothing of your talents."

"*Magna civitas, magna solitudo,*" said the scholar, with a sigh.

Encouraged by Eva, Charles started again next morning with his manuscript. He looked worn and disappointed when he returned. Eva was grieved to see how much he had altered in two anxious days. Lines of care seemed to have grown on his usually serene and placid brow; his cheek looked hollow and unnaturally pale; the light of hope had vanished from his eye. The day had been one of drizzling rain; he was bespattered with mud as high as his knees, his clothes were damp, his linen bereft of all smoothness: nothing gives a man a more jaded appearance than soiled and rumpled linen. Eva poured out a glass of wine and brought it to him: she thought a stimulant would do him good. She made him pull off his muddy boots where he was, while she fetched his slippers and a dry coat. She sat beside him on the sofa, and with one arm thrown lovingly round his neck, her face raised to his with a soft, sympathizing, but not hopeful smile, prepared to hear the day's history. The

same non-success. Half the people he had gone to would not look at the MS. at all. "We only deal in light literature, sir; it sells the best." One had asked if the doctrine was *sound* church, and on Charles answering that it was not tractarian, he rudely pushed the MS. back to him with the laconic remark, "You 'll not deal here, sir."

Then Charles had tried what terms he could make by publishing the work on his own responsibility. None of them would undertake it without the money in hand. Eva's arm clasped her husband still more lovingly as he narrated the mortifications he had met with; several times she kissed his pale cheek. And Charles felt that, however rude raged the storm without, there was always a sunbeam to disperse its effects within. One man had offered to publish the work for a hundred guineas, but that Charles could not agree to give; his money was settled: he had but a life interest in anything.

"But I will join you," exclaimed Eva, eagerly.

He explained to her that she was in the same position.

Eva blushed. "Perhaps we could borrow it."

"I should not like to do that, even if I could. If, as these publishers seem to prognosticate from

their unwillingness to have anything to do with it, the book should not sell, I should have no means of repaying the loan."

"By living closely we could pay it by degrees."

"I may die. What could you spare out of 50*l.* a year?"

"God forbid that should happen, darling. But here is dinner, come and eat; you have had nothing since breakfast. We will think over it, and try to strike out some plan."

But Charles could not eat his dinner; he took a piece of steak on his plate to please his wife, but he was obliged to leave it. The next day he was ill. Charles was not a sanguine temperament: more plodding than enthusiastic, he could endure a great deal without disappointment, but when once he was disappointed, he felt it keenly. This was a heavy blow. It was the overthrow of long cherished hopes, rendering nugatory many a toilsome hour of intense thought. It is said that none but a parent can know what a child is to him; and quite as truly, none but an author can know what his book is to him. The companion of so many days and nights, the subject of so many anxious thoughts, the object of so many hopes and fears—it becomes almost a part of himself.

Next morning, Eva persuaded her husband to lie in bed. As soon as she had given him his tea, and coaxed him into promising to try and take a sleep, she put on her walking things, which she had previously stolen out of the room for the purpose, and set out for the publisher's who had made the offer respecting the hundred guineas, with her own MS. under her shawl. She felt very hot when she reached the door. She experienced a shy nervous sensation at offering her own production for sale; but she mastered it, drew down her veil, and entered. With not a little confusion she made known her business and drew forth her MS. The man looked through it, and smiled. Eva felt ready to die. After glancing at several pages, he said,

“I should not wonder, ma'am, if you could get a purchaser for this. It seems prettily written. I don't deal in such things myself, but I know a man who I think might buy it. If you like I'll give you a line to him.”

“Thank you, I should be very glad,” said Eva, feeling greatly relieved, almost as if the sale was effected. “What do you think the work is worth, sir?” she asked.

“Oh, indeed, I don't know the value of those

tales of fiction. If this man buys it, I dare say he will give you as much as you would get elsewhere. He has not long set up, and I dare say is not overstocked." He scribbled a note and gave it to her.

"Is that far off?" asked Eva, reading the address.

"No, ma'am; the third turning on the right hand as you go down this street, and the first after. It is a corner house, you can't mistake it."

Eva settled her shawl over the MS. and departed. She felt very uncomfortable, as if every one she met knew what she was going to do, and she glanced several times to see if any part of the parcel should have appeared in sight.

"And, pray, how much do you expect for this, ma'am?" said the man she had been referred to, after tossing over the leaves as if he thought very little about what was in them.

Eva had not a conception of the value. She thought, however, she would make a bold stroke, and answered,

"A hundred guineas."

The man laughed, as if it was the funniest thing he had heard for a long time. Eva felt

both ashamed and angry. Her face was burning beneath her thick veil. The man was arranging the MS. in the same manner that he had received it, evidently to present it to her forthwith.

Making a desperate effort, Eva said, "If you are not inclined to give that, what would you think of offering?"

"Why, if I took it at all, I was thinking of offering you 20*l.* for it. We run a great risk in purchasing these light things ; the half of them go to the trunkmakers."

Eva had lectured her fortitude well before she put it to this test. She had tried to apply to herself all the self-reliance and energy with which she had been used to inspirit Charles to bear up against discouragement, and she found she needed all her acquired resolution now. Calling it to her aid, she reflected—"It is this man's advantage to depreciate my book : I will not mind what he says. The other man said it was pretty." Though determined to take the 20*l.* if he would give no more, she held out valiantly for 50*l.* It ended in his splitting the difference : she handed him over the MS. and received 35*l.* down. Of that MS. he afterwards made 700*l.*

She was tired from walking, and took a cab to

return home. She found Charles had risen, and was very anxious and uneasy at her absence. Her bright happy look reassured him. She only stayed to kiss him, and ran quickly up to her room to examine her little bag of savings.

This was money she had from time to time put aside, as she could spare it, to meet any adventitious demand which should arise; and if none required it, she had a hope of some time accomplishing a visit to see her mother by means of the hoard. She poured it out into her lap, and reckoned it nineteen pounds some odd shillings. Adding some silver from her purse to make up the twenty pounds, she returned it, with the thirty-five sovereigns received from the publisher, into the bag, and took it down to her husband. He looked frightened and annoyed when he saw all the gold. Fifty-five pound looks a large sum to people who have not much doings with wealth.

“What have you been doing, Eva? How did you get this money?”

“Honestly,” she replied, with a smile.

“Tell me the truth, Eva; what have you been doing?” he asked, rather severely.

Eva’s joyousness was damped by his manner. It was not the way in which she expected her

treasure would have been received. With an abashed look and somewhat deprecating tone, she replied—

“I have not done anything wrong, Charles.”

“You have been pawning something, my dear: you should not have done that without my knowledge.”

“I have not, Charles. I sold something; but it was my own: no one else had any right to it, not even you.”

Charles smiled. “I do not know about that, Eva. Whatever it was, I think a lawyer could tell you I had some right to it. But tell me candidly about it, my love.” He put his arm round her and drew her kindly to his side.

With a very deepened colour she told him the history of the disposal of the tale, and of the hoard she had collected. She said nothing about her intentions as to the ultimate destination of the latter, lest the idea of disappointing her might detract from the pleasure of its acquisition. She added that in twelve months she thought they might be able to pay off the remaining 45*l.*, and she had no doubt, if she joined him in an I O U., that the publisher would run the risk of their both not dying within that time.

"But," argued her husband, "if I died, you could not spare a farthing."

"Dear Charles, you know the proverb, 'Nothing venture nothing have.' If anything did happen to you, my father and mother would never see me want; so come with me to the publisher, and we will try to make a bargain."

Though she thus endeavoured to reassure her husband, and induce him to allow her to pledge herself to liquidate his debt in the case of his death, nothing was farther from her mind than to seek assistance at Glenmore. She was too proud for that. She had chosen her lot and would abide by it: however scanty her means, she would either add to them by her own exertions, or else make them suffice.

They made the bargain. They paid the *55l.* down, and pledged themselves to pay the balance within the year; and the publisher—to use Eva's expression—ran the risk of their both not dying within it. If they failed to pay, he was to have the copyright of the work. Both felt very happy when this was arranged; Eva the most so. To assist her naturally sanguine disposition, she had more confidence in her husband's abilities than he had himself; her physiological organization con-

tained more energy and less caution. She had a firm reliance on the obstacle-levelling powers of exertion. She believed that wherever it was perseveringly pursued it would eventually succeed.

Three days of their London week were gone ; they determined to try and see something of the great city in the remaining three. They had so little money that they could not expend much in sight-seeing ; but all they could see for nothing they did. An exhibition of pictures, Madame Tussaud's, and one or two other shilling sights, they indulged themselves with. They walked in Hyde-park, and strolled up Rotten-row into Kensington-gardens ; places with whose names Eva had had a story-book familiarity since her childhood ; and she was delighted to see them, though they were very different from the fairy-land her childish fancy had imagined them.

“Charles, when I am rich enough, I will have a brougham,” she began, as, sitting on a fallen tree to rest, she watched the luxurious carriages roll past.

“My darling Eva !” interrupted her husband.

“Do not speak to me in that reproachful tone, Charles. Why should I not have a brougham when I am rich ?”

“When you are : you are a long way from it.”

“Then I will wait a long time for the brougham. When you are a bishop I shall have one, shan’t I?”

“Eva, love, for a wise little woman like you, you sometimes talk great nonsense.”

“*Nous verrons.*”

Westminster Abbey was within a walk of their lodgings, and they went to see it—a greater feast to Charles than to Eva.

“Authors though we be, I am afraid they will not let us in here when we die,” she laughingly remarked to her husband, as she waited for him to pore over some inscription Edward Phillips had directed his attention to.

“Phillips’ translation is certainly the correct one,” said Charles musingly,—and as he walked on with his wife, he continued—

“Your cousin Phillips is certainly very clever: I wonder he does not turn his talents to account, and write. If you were his wife, Eva, I think you would make him.”

“Perhaps I should if I were his wife; but as I am yours instead, I am very glad he does not write.”

“Why so, dear?”

“Because I think one literary curate is as much as one diocese is likely to have preferment for.”

“ My darling, don’t be selfish.”

“ I am not selfish, Charles. But when I’ve taken the bushel off my own candle, that all the world may have the light of it, why should I light other people’s ? ”

“ My poor book ! I wonder what people will think of its light.”

They went into the houses of Parliament. Eva’s eye turned lovingly to the bishops’ bench. Nothing would content her but that Charles should come and sit on it. She did not tell him why, and he never guessed.

“ Years hence——” he began to remark, following on some train of inward thought.

“ When you will be saying,” (took up Eva), “ ‘ Brother of Oxford, the first time I ever sat upon this bench, was, when as curate of Hilton, I came up to town to get my first literary work published, and’ ” (seeing his impatient gesture) “ ‘ was angry with my poor wife, now dead and gone, for prophesying that I should ever fill it as I do now.’ ”

“ Do not talk of your not being there to share it, and I will forgive the prophecy and its foolishness : that contingency would indeed rive its consummation of all joy,” said her husband, with

deep and tender feeling in his tone. Eva滑ed her hand into his, and led him away.

They steamed up and down the river, wondering at the busy thousands which populated its surface; gazing with interest on the historic buildings which battlemented its shores; on its bridges, their very names teeming with associations of the past; marvelling at the vastness of the great city, in which they had wanted so little, and found that little so hard to get.

Their holding as tenants was good until Monday, as they had come up on the Monday before; Eva wished to stay, and go to St. Paul's to prayers, but, as the clergyman who had taken Charles' duty, had only offered to perform the Sunday services in case Charles was detained in town, he did not think he was justified in remaining when not obliged, so they returned on Saturday. The officiating parson *pro tem.* laughed heartily at Charles' scruples, and said he did not know there were such fine consciences in the world now-a-days, or he would have provided against their inconvenience.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JEWISH MEETING.

ANNUALLY, a meeting was held in the Town-hall of Hilton, for the benefit of the Society for Propagating Christianity among the Jews. A deputation came down from the parent society, to report the progress of its exertions, and a collection was made in its aid. Lord Hilton, who patronized every public thing connected with the town, invariably attended with all his family; a circumstance which conduced, quite as much as any other, to collect a numerous audience: in a word, in the eyes of the good people of Hilton, and its immediate neighbourhood, it gave an *éclat* to the meeting; and *éclat* does a good deal, even for a religious assembly. As the meeting became more considerable, people who resided beyond the parish, thought they might as well drive in on that day, and pay their subscriptions in person; instead of sending them in, in driblets,

on such and such a person's card. So the meeting was made up, until the great room of the Town-hall was as full as it could hold ; and the deputation would pronounce a graceful eulogium, very pleasant and encouraging to hear, on the deep interest the highly respectable neighbourhood of Hilton evinced in the welfare of a society which was universally recognised as doing incalculable service, in furthering the extension of Christianity among God's chosen people.

It was a pet society of the Bishop's. Eva knew that of old ; and when she heard that the day had been named for holding it, she tried to persuade Charles to take an active part in the meeting, and to speak on the subject; which was one she knew him to be well up in. He was disinclined, and said perhaps he should be only interfering ; the deputation would say all that was necessary.

" Yes, on the details of the society ; but you know so much about the Jews, you could talk of them for two hours without stopping. This Bishop likes his clergy to take an interest in them : I heard that when I was over here before."

" How will he know what I said, or if I said anything ? "

"We will put it in the 'Ecclesiastical Gazette'—draw up a report of the meeting and send it there. It will bring you under his notice, where you have never got yet."

"I have studied the Jewish history a good deal, but it would take a little consideration to select what to say."

"It will not be for a week: you have plenty of time to consider."

"I shall see whether the deputation will like my assisting."

"I would rather please the Bishop than the deputation."

The meeting was fixed for a Monday—the Monday week after the London trip. On Sunday, as they walked to church, Charles remarked to his wife that he was not pleased with his sermon; he had composed it too hastily, having been occupied on the subject of the Jews. Eva asked him why he had not brought out one of his Lurgan sermons; he had some beautiful ones which she had heard him preach there. He had no reason to give; he just thought he would make this one do.

It was the first day of the stoves being lighted in the church, and, as is often the case in in-

differently aired places, it had the effect of making the atmosphere heavy and oppressive; which, with a slight smoke that proceeded from the dampness of the flues, made respiration anything but an easy or pleasant process. Eva, the delicacy which had been natural to her of late increased by her situation, found it very distressing. She took off her boa, untied her bonnet-strings, and smelt unceasingly at her vinaigrette; all the time casting uneasy glances into the Castle pew: in the corner of which, usually occupied by Lord Hilton, who on this occasion had taken a lower seat, was stationed a small spare figure with a pale and plain face.

This ascetic-looking individual did not seem one much calculated to call a blush to beauty's cheek; yet, after every glance, Eva's appeared hotter, and herself more restless: as much as if he had had the evil eye for her. At last she rose from her seat, and stole out of church as quietly as she could, while the congregation were kneeling at the Litany. But the silk dress she wore was thick and long, and its rustle betrayed her. Several heads were raised, and some intelligent glances exchanged, as the young expectant mother passed blushingly down the aisle:

anxious eyes following her from the reading desk.

When Charles entered the vestry room to robe for the pulpit, he found his wife there sitting by the fire.

"My dear love, are you better?" he asked, advancing hastily towards her with a look of intense interest.

"Send away the sexton," she whispered.

"You need not wait, Munro; Mrs. Stanhope will assist me."

As he closed the door, Eva proceeded to draw something from beneath her shawl. From the bewildered and concerned expression of Charles' face, it might almost be imagined he expected to see produced a portion of his property which was not expected to make its appearance for another month at least. He certainly did not contemplate seeing what did come forth—a bundle of sermons.

"I have been at home for these," said Eva; "there is a strange gentleman in the Castle pew, and I did not like your having a bad sermon to preach."

"Oh, it is not so bad as all that comes to. It is pretty well; but I could have made it much better had I had time."

"Keep it until you have. I have brought these for you to choose from. In case you forget what is in them I have looked out this, which I heard you preach; it is about Naaman the Syrian. I recollect I admired it greatly."

"It will do capitally; thank you, love. Help me on with this gown, dear. Who is the stranger?"

Eva hesitated a moment.

"Some one Lord Hilton seems to set great store by: he has gone out of his own corner for him. Do your best, Charles, love."

"Are not you coming in to hear?"

"No; I will go quietly home: the church is oppressive, and I feel hot and flurried—and a little guilty," she added, with a smile, as he kissed and left her.

She was waiting his coming home in the parlour of the parsonage. Luncheon had been put on the table when the returning congregation began to appear, passing the gate. It was a very frugal meal; a dish of "smiling" potatoes and a jug of milk. Charles was longer than usual in arriving. Eva had reasons for thinking he might have gone home with the Hiltons; she turned from the window and stood contemplating the potatoes, undecided whether to attack them

while hot, or to wait longer on the chance of Charles' company, when the door opened, and the lean, slim occupant of the corner of the Castle pew entered, followed by Charles, who introduced his wife to the Bishop of Salisbury.

Though Eva's self-possession rarely forsook her, it was not proof against this unexpected innovation on the privacy of domestic economy. She blushed to the temples. Even the insensitive Charles seemed put out. He suspected himself of having done a very wrong thing in bringing the Bishop into that room, and he looked at Eva for a confirmation of his fears: not that she was one of those ladies who can dart wicked looks askant when their husbands commit a domestic error of the kind; but he thought he should get some inkling from her manner, as to whether potatoes and milk were very heinous things for a bishop to be let see.

"You are going to partake of a lunch I am very fond of," said his lordship, the courtesies of introduction over. "If you will extend its hospitality to me, I will join you."

"We will not ask your lordship to partake of such curate's fare," said Eva, ringing the bell. "I will have some cold meat in, in a moment."

"Please not to order it for me; I would not touch it. There is not a man in my diocese can lunch with greater zest on potatoes and milk than I can. I like my lunch; it is my chief meal of the day. I eat but little at dinner; an over-loaded stomach is a bad thing for mind or body."

Eva thought he looked as if a little nourishing food would be of great service, at least to one of his component parts; but she said nothing. When Ryan came in she wished to send for some cold beef: they had had a rib for dinner the day before, which, cold, was to be their dinner to-day; but the Bishop would not allow her: he said that if all the dainties of a palace were on the table, he should eat nothing but potatoes and milk; so Ryan was only asked for another plate and glass.

"It gives me great pleasure to see this meal," remarked the Bishop, while he lunched; "it gives promise that Mr. Stanhope does not mean to follow in the steps of some of the clergy of this diocese, who have become so obese and plethoric, from pampering their appetites, that they esteem it hard work to waddle to their church and perform the services on Sundays. The sermon we had to-day was not composed by a man who had dulled his intellect by table indulgences. You

lost a beautiful sermon, Mrs. Stanhope : I observed you left the church early in the service."

"The church was very oppressive, my lord," said Eva with a blush, which the Bishop did not attribute to the rightful cause.

"My object in coming here," he continued, addressing himself to Eva, "as I have been telling your husband as we walked here, is to try and enforce by example, what I have vainly endeavoured to inculcate by precept: a greater exertion on the part of my clergy, in forwarding the interests of the association which is to hold a meeting in this town to-morrow ; and to persuade them to lend a more ready and effectual help to the great cause of reclaiming, from beneath the ban of a rejected Saviour, a people chosen of God from the beginning of the world." The Bishop paused.

Eva wished Charles would say something. As he did not, she ventured to remark—

"It is a subject Charles has given his mind a good deal to, my lord."

The Bishop turned and looked at him with surprised pleasure.

"Has he indeed? You did not tell me that, Mr. Stanhope. Perhaps then you will take part in the meeting to-morrow?"

“I am prepared to make some remarks, if your lordship thinks I shall not be intruding on the exclusive province of the deputation.”

“On the contrary, I should say you were supporting the cause. I shall like to hear your opinions, myself. ^{Learned} I expect you and I shall agree upon many points, and I am glad to have made your acquaintance.”

He got up and went over to Charles’ table and looked through the books upon it. He ought to have been pleased; for the Bishop was a learned man, and there was not one in the vernacular there. He and Charles got into a discussion on some Greek roots, which lasted until it was time to go to evening service; whither the Bishop accompanied them. He sat in Eva’s pew, to the door of which Lord Hilton came at the conclusion of the service, to invite her and her husband to return with them to the Castle to dinner. Eva excused herself, but said she had no doubt her husband would be charmed to accept the invitation: she would go into the vestry and overrule any objections he might have at leaving her alone.

“And remember, darling, not to eat much,” was her whispered injunction as she parted with him.

She was in bed when he came home, but there was a sandwich on the table for him.

Charles acquitted himself at the meeting to the perfect satisfaction of the Bishop and his wife: his own wife, I mean, for in that respect the curate was richer than the Bishop. His discourse was a most learned exposition on the Jewish history, past and present, expressed in forcible and lucid language; and he concluded by sending very home to the hearts of his hearers, their future accountability as to what efforts they had made for their conversion. Many compliments were showered on him as he left the platform; but, perhaps the most convincing proof of the power of the appeal, lay in the fact of the offerings collected amounting to nearly double the sum they had ever before attained on a similar occasion.

The “deputation” left in no good humour, notwithstanding his weighty money bags; for he felt that he had been extinguished by his more luminous auxiliary. The Bishop lunched at the parsonage, and Eva, who knew he liked to have a finger in most parochial pies, asked his advice concerning a school for sewed muslin, as it is termed, which she had long contemplated establishing in the parish; having seen how beneficially

they worked in the north of Ireland. It was a new idea to the Bishop; but Eva managed so subtilely, that while she supplied all the information, she made it appear that all the suggestions emanated from his lordship. She wrote down several hints he gave her, which she meant to follow just so far as they answered her purpose; she obtained a promise from him that he would call and see how it worked, when fairly established, and she further gained his approval in the tangible shape of a 5*l.* note. Scholar though he was, woman's wit was too much for him: he left believing the school to be a bantling of his own. Highly pleased with both the Stanhopes, before taking leave of Charles, he made him an offer to stand godfather, in the event of the expected child being a boy; an offer gratefully accepted.

It had been a matter of great surprise and some disappointment to Miss Boare, that she had never been invited to spend any time at the parsonage. She had not even been present at the floricultural feast; having been on a visit at the time at a great distance from Hilton. It had several times occurred to Eva that the parasitic little woman would be expecting a hospitality she very much wished to extend to her; and from a more dis-

interested motive than that from which Miss Boare's invitations generally emanated. She preserved a kindly recollection of the old lady from by-gone days, and she felt there would be a degree of pleasure in having her for a guest. It was, however, a pleasure she was obliged to postpone, as she had hitherto been unable to accomplish the purchase of a bed for the spare room. Circumstances now made it necessary that a bed should be provided for an additional official, who was shortly to be introduced into the curate's small establishment. This bed Eva had put into the spare room, and Miss Boare was invited to occupy it until it should be required for the rightful proprietor; an invitation which was accepted with alacrity.

"Eva, my dear, why did not you tell me it was the want of a bed that prevented your asking me?" said the visitor, as Eva explained. "I would have given you one."

"Perhaps that was one reason why I did not," said Eva, blushing.

"Nonsense, my dear. I would much rather. When this bed goes into the nursery, I will supply its place; so that shall be an excuse for keeping me out no longer;" and she chuckled, as though she were in earnest.

Indeed, she seemed to enjoy her sojourn at the parsonage vastly. Eva was very kind and considerate, and did all she could to make it pass pleasantly; she spent as much time as her avocations would admit in gaily conversing with her guest, on subjects within her ken. She drove her out a great deal, and contrived to make as many calls as possible; Miss Boare having a decided *penchant* for getting inside other people's houses. She rang for fresh coals at every shrug of the old lady's shoulders, and refilled her glass of wine without making any inquiry whether she wished for more. She gave her free admittance to every part of the house; and Miss Boare would follow her whithersoever she went, poking into garret and kitchen, reckoning the blankets on old Norah's bed, and telling Eva she would spoil servants if she indulged them so—they would not know how to get out of their beds; examining the pot of poor's broth, and fishing up the pieces of meat with the long ladle, lecturing Eva on having it so savory, saying it was a very different kind *she* gave them: which Eva readily believed. She would reprove Eva for putting so much tea in the pot (it was coffee she drank), and so much cream over the tart,

(it was pudding she always eat), and she would smile and nod knowingly at Charles, and say,—

“ Young housekeepers are extravagant, Mr. Stanhope. I must give a little advice.”

Charles, who liked his tea strong and his tart mild, thought she was an officious old woman, and that Eva’s housekeeping did not require mending. He did not like the house half so well with Miss Boare in it. When he came in he no longer had Eva to listen to everything he had to narrate; he was ashamed to kiss her, as he had always been used, on going out and coming in; Miss Boare’s lynx-eyes were always watching. Instead of sitting on his knee until he went to his books, Eva now went off to the drawing-room with Miss Boare, and the hearth looked lonely and uncomfortable without her: he wondered what pleasure his refined wife could take in the old gossip’s society. Then she was always inciting Eva to pile down coals, until the effects came through his shirt; and when he remonstrated and told Eva he was nearly distilled, she laughed heartily, and said she supposed it would be “Essence of Philosophy.” Charles felt rather aggrieved that his wife should think worse of Miss Boare’s being too cold than of

his being too hot, and wished Miss Boare at home.

Eva had laboured very assiduously to try and have her school established before she should be invalided. She wrote to Belfast for an efficient mistress, and she succeeded in finding one who would come for six months for 30*l.* At the end of six months it was expected that the most proficient of the girls could supply her place; if Eva, who understood the business perfectly, superintended. Miss Boare added another 5*l.* to the bishop's, Lady Hilton gave 10*l.* The remaining 10*l.* had to be made up in the town. Eva set out to collect it, and took anything they would give, even pence from the poor or miserly, and eventually made up the sum. She paid the mistress's travelling expenses herself. She opened a connection with a house in Glasgow, which was to supply her with the materials, take back the work when done, and remunerate the workers. At first the children were placed to work on useless rags, but before Eva's visits were suspended she had the pleasure of seeing three dozen little girls, who would otherwise have been playing in the street before their doors, all seated with their hoops in large pieces of "insertion:"

the work *par excellence* of beginners. These pieces are about a yard wide and several yards in length; the price allowed for working them is from four to five shillings each, which is divided among the girls who have been employed on them.

Miss Boare, who possessed the knack of what is commonly called “taking the good out of any thing,” with the lower orders, never failed to impress on them what idle reprobates they were, and the deep obligations they were under to the kind friends who had rescued them from such evil ways, and put them in the way of earning their livelihood. They were not sorry when one day they saw Eva come without her. She had gone to visit a family near Salisbury, having intimated to Eva before her departure that she should like to return for the christening; that she would stand sponsor, provided the baby were a girl, and further, that she made it a rule to present each child she stood for with 100*l.* and she required them, as she only stood for girls, to be named ‘Mary,’ after herself: which latter clause Charles ignored the moment he heard of it. If the baby were a girl he would have her called after her mother and no one else. His wife gently suggested that “Eva Mary would be a pretty name.”

CHAPTER X.

SYMPATHY.

THERE was not a sound to be heard in Hilton parsonage. Pale anxious figures stole about with stealthy steps and shoeless feet ; at the bottom of each door was placed a muffled weight to prevent its closing ; the wire of the hall-bell had been cut ; across the approach a fallen tree was placed, to prevent any vehicle passing. Many people, chiefly of an inferior class, were lingering about the gate ; many more, alighting from carriages, were going on foot along the grass to the back door ; and their returning report to the expectants at the gate, was still “no amendment.” Then looks were anxiously bent towards the road from the town, as if some hope lay along it. A fly, belonging to one of the doctors of the neighbourhood, had been sent to the station, beyond the other end of the town, to wait the arrival of the train from Bristol, whither Ryan had been despatched (there were

no telegraphs in those days), in search of further aid, when it was found the skill of Hilton could do no more. Anxiety was in every eye, sympathy on every lip, gloom upon every brow. No one would imagine from the mournful excitement abroad, that it was only so small an atom in the social scale, as the curate's wife, who was dying.

Yet, from the remarks which passed among the crowd, she seemed linked to those hearts by a chain of kindly deeds. She had taken the wife of one carriage airings, because the motion of his own cart was too rough for her, after her illness. She had got the daughter of another a situation as governess, in Dublin, and she wrote that Mrs. Stanhope's introduction of her had secured her great respect. She had recommended the sister of another as a maid to Lady Mary, and had taught her to dress hair herself, and she was now installed at the castle. She had brought jelly twice a week to one; she had paid for a wet nurse for the child of another, while his wife lay ill of the fever, and had brought her the grapes she had as a present from the Castle. She had got her husband to intercede with Lord Hilton for another who had been unjustly turned out of the Castle employment, and he was now re-instated. She

had had a tin ear-trumpet made for one old Christian, whose greatest grief for the loss of his hearing was that he could no longer hear the services of the church, and who was now at her gate, with the trumpet to his ear, trying if he could hear any words of hope. Many others there were, who had each some debt of kindness to discharge by sympathy. It was a lesson to learn ; how much good can be done by one individual, possessed of neither rank nor wealth, only the will. Even the sturdiest dissenter in the parish, who had always been a thorn in the side of the minister of the Established Church, and who had once been heard to say he hoped yet to see the pigmarket held inside the church walls, drew the back of his horny hand across his eyes, and said she was a young and winsome thing to die. She had taught his crippled only boy a kind of carved ivory work, which was a source of unceasing amusement to him, and had made him less fretful and impatient of his affliction ever since, and the parent's heart was touched.

" 'Twill kill the parson, that's certain sure," says one. " I hear a bit never went inside his mouth since she took bad."

" If good wishes could keep her alive for him,"

said a woman, “she’d live till he was tired of her.”

“I wish to God the Bristol doctor would come; sure the train can’t but be in,” said a third.

“There’s safe to be an accident and delay it, of a day it is wanted so bad,” said a fourth.

At last a horse’s head was espied, and in hot haste down the road from the town, came the looked-for fly. Ryan was on the box lashing the horse to a gallop. His first eager inquiry from the crowd was for his mistress. Not dead—hope still! He leaped from the box and almost pulled the occupant of the fly out of it. The new arrival was a small, attenuated looking man with a very large forehead, and deep sunken eyes of peculiar brightness. He gave some directions regarding a medicine chest he had brought with him, and walked across the grass towards the house, quickly overtaken by Ryan and the box.

The people lingered, hoping to hear some intelligence of the new doctor’s opinion; but they were disappointed: no one came from the house. At last old Andrews come down from the town. His wife was at the parsonage, having gone, as soon as she heard Mrs. Stanhope had been taken ill, to see if she could do anything for her; and

finding it was likely to be so bad a case, had remained with her, and sat up the last three nights. On the strength of his wife's presence there, Andrews was urged to go up to the house. But he brought no intelligence ; he had only seen old Norah. His wife, the nursetender, and the three doctors were in Mrs. Stanhope's room ; her husband, more dead than alive, was on the step of the stair outside her door, and nothing more was known. It was getting late, and the people dispersed to their homes ; each feeling as they entered, as if something was wanting there.

The last report of the day was communicated at the hotel, at about eleven o'clock, by a returning messenger, sent from the Castle to inquire, and ran like wildfire through the town. "Mrs. Stanhope was unconscious, and sinking so rapidly it was not expected she could live through the night."

Many a fervent prayer was offered up that night in supplication to the uplifted Arm, mercifully to stay the heavy blow with which their meek and gifted curate was threatened.

The next morning, though inquiry was in every eye, no word passed the lip. Each feared to ask the question, to which they expected the answer

would be the death of hope. Some went down to the parsonage gate to see if the blinds were down, others argued that was no criterion, as blinds were always down at that hour in the morning. One alone was up, and pale terror was in every look that turned to it: the sash was a little open. It was Eva's room.

"She is dead!" exclaimed the sturdy dis-senter, and covering his face with his hands he wept aloud.

A knot had collected round a little girl who seemed to be able to tell something. She said their Sarah and her baby were at the parsonage. Mr. Stanhope had come to their house like a mad man, without hat or shoes, in the middle of the night, and, in spite of remonstrance, had snatched the infant, but a few days old, out of bed, and ran off with it rolled up in a blanket. The mother did not like letting it go at first, but when he said it was thought hearing it cry might save his wife's life, she no longer resisted, and had followed it herself at daylight. By this it was augured that the baby was dead.

Ryan, seeing the people collected round the gate, now came down to relieve their anxiety. He brought better news than they expected: their

prayers had been heard, the Arm had been stayed. The circumstance of the window, he explained: his mistress occupied another room than her own for her illness. Neither was the baby dead, though it could scarcely be said to be alive; a poor little weakly girl. The *ruse* of Sarah King's baby had been a suggestion of the Bristol doctor's. When Mrs. Stanhope had sunk, from exhaustion, into a stupor so deathlike, that no remedies they could use took any effect, and she had even ceased to swallow the restoratives they forced into her mouth, he proposed trying how the cry of a baby might operate. Her own had never uttered one: it lay in a state of torpor which could hardly be called life. The strange baby had been brought to the bed side, and made to cry by exposure to the cold. Then nature triumphed where art had failed: the young mother was recalled to life. The warm healthy infant was placed in her bosom, where it still lay: the doctors could tell she was conscious of its presence, though of nothing else. Sarah King was snug and warm in Norah's bed, with the poor weakly infant by her side.

Then inquiries were made for the parson, how he was bearing up?

"The poor master," said Ryan, "I suppose

he'll get back his sinses, when herself rekivers. At this present moment they are clane gone. Think of him runnin' to Sally King's cottage last night in his stockin' feet. We'd all off our shoes in the house, for fear o' makin' a noise; though I b'lieve at the same time, herself would not have heard a cannon shot fired off at her ear. Well, when he heard the babby was wantin', off he runs as he was, and never knew he hadn't on his shoes till I showed him his feet all bleedin'."

The day after his arrival, the Bristol doctor was seen walking up to the hotel about a quarter of an hour before the time of the Bristol train's passing. Ryan was following with a box. A fly was ordered at the hotel to convey the doctor to the station. There was a hurried consultation between two or three of the most wealthy of the tradespeople of the town; one was the sturdy dissenter. It ended in their asking to speak with the doctor. They inquired of him if Mrs. Stanhope was out of danger?

"No, indeed, my good friends; I am sorry to say (for she must be good to be so beloved by you all), that if Mrs. Stanhope is ever out of danger, it will not be for a very long time.

However, there is hope ; her constitution is good though her frame is delicate. I never before saw any one rally who was so nearly dead as she was last night.

There was a little delay, and some hesitation among the deputation ; they appeared to have some communication to make, and each seemed backward about making it. At last, one of them took courage, and told the doctor that curates were never very rich, their parson no more than another ; but as they would not, for double the cost, that he should lose his wife, if the doctor would stop and mind her until she was out of danger, they, the deputation, would remunerate him handsomely. The old man seemed touched by the offer, so blunt but warm-hearted. He explained to them that his remaining could not benefit Mrs. Stanhope. All the remedies his skill could suggest he had ordered for her, the other doctors would watch their progress. He hoped much from nature. The deception of the healthy child being hers must be continued ; as, if the other died, which it was very likely to do, and she was aware of it, he believed she would sink at once. The tie of nature combined with perfect repose, and, when she could bear it, nourishment,

were the best doctors. And as there were patients in Bristol to whom he could be of use, he took leave of the tradesmen and stepped into the fly, which had come round while he stood talking to them.

For many days Mrs. Stanhope continued the same, hovering between life and death ; clasping to her breast the child she believed herself to be nourishing, and which was stolen away while she slept, to be nourished by its own mother, who was strong enough to keep both infants supplied. Prayers were offered up for the sufferer at public worship of every denomination in the town, upon Sunday. The church service was performed by Mr. Griffin's curate, whom he kindly sent to spare Charles. Indeed, no less than five clergymen had sent to offer to take the duty. On the following Sunday Charles himself officiated. Fervently was he joined in the thanksgiving for the mercy which had hitherto spared his beloved wife, and there was not a dry eye in the church, when, at the conclusion of the sermon, he addressed a few sentences of deep gratitude to his parishioners for the kindness and sympathy they had shown for one whom he trusted it might yet please God to permit to thank them herself ; though at

the present it was very uncertain whether she should ever appear amongst them again.

Nor was it merely in expression that the people of Hilton manifested their sympathy. It developed itself in a more substantial form. It became known what the Bristol doctor had said about nourishment, and as there was not much confidence in Charles' and Norah's cooking, long before anything except champagne and liquid blanc-mange was allowed to pass the invalid's lips, pheasants, snipe, young chickens, jellies, old wine, hothouse fruit, everything esteemed a delicacy and beyond the reach of a curate's purse, was left in quantities at the parsonage door, and carried by Charles, who looked as if a little of them would do himself good, to the sick poor, to whom they were otherwise unattainable.

"Dear Charles, these things must be very expensive," said Eva, when, as she got better, she lay watching him carving a chicken about the size of a goose egg by her bedside. "I am sure I could eat plain food now."

"I don't think you could."

"I could eat rice, or gruel, or something that is cheap. What do you eat yourself, my darling?"

“ Oh, anything that is there: I don’t want dainties.”

“ What had you for dinner yesterday ? ”

“ Fish.”

“ No meat ? ”

“ I did not want meat when I had fish.”

“ What fish was it ? ”

“ What fish ? —oh ! some of those fish they fry.”

“ Trout ? ”

“ It did not taste like trout.”

“ Samlets, perhaps : I did not think they were in season.” (she never thought of guessing salt herring.) “ You must not buy these very dear things for me, Charles.”

“ I do not buy them : they are sent here. But I will not tell you about it now, you know you must not talk.”

“ Let me ask one question, Charles: is it from Oakstone they are sent ? ”

“ No: from every one in the parish. Hush ! now.”

“ People are very kind,” she said languidly, and after swallowing a few mouthfuls, turned to her baby and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INVALID.

THE baby verified the adage of curate's children, and to the surprise of every one, lived on: supported ostensibly by its mother, who would not otherwise have been content, but in reality by Sarah King, the tiny thing actually began to thrive. Charles felt at a loss what line of conduct to pursue towards the Bishop. His lordship had only offered to stand for a boy, and Charles feared that to inform him of its being a girl might have the appearance of encroaching; still, it seemed to him neglectful not to apprise him of its arrival at all. As all consultation with Eva, who was his right hand in such dilemmas, was strictly prohibited, he had no relief in his perplexity. At last, with a strong conviction that she would have counselled it, he wrote a note, a very humble one, saying that as his lordship had been kind enough to promise to stand sponsor if the child were

a boy, he took the liberty of informing him that the baby was a girl. He received an answer containing kind wishes for his little daughter, and saying that the promise should hold good for a future time, when he had no doubt it would be claimed. Charles thought if the scenes just gone through had to be enacted again, he would much rather his lordship's offer went to waste. He showed Lord Hilton the answer he had received. The good-natured peer said—

“Never mind, Stanhope ! keep his lordship for another occasion. If you are not otherwise provided, I will be godfather myself. Lady Hilton, I know, has an objection to stand for any child, but Mary will bear me company.”

So Lord Hilton, Lady Mary, and Miss Boare were the sponsors, and the little damsel was named “Eva Mary :” she was christened without her mother's knowledge, though it went to old Mrs. Andrews' heart not to show her her baby in its christening robes. Eva was not allowed to be told anything that occurred ; the doctors wished to keep her mind in as blank a state of repose as possible, and she had never heard what beautiful presents her baby had had. Sarah King's infant was christened on the same day as its foster sister, and

was presented with a *5l.* note by Lord Hilton ; as a reward, he said, for giving the stout bawl that brought back Mrs. Stanhope to life.

As soon as it was considered safe to move her, the doctor wished the invalid's air to be changed. The Castle family, whose kindness had been unremitting all through, immediately proposed that she and her baby should come to the Castle. Though it was only a mile distant from the parsonage—they being situated beyond the two extremities of the town, whose length lay between them—yet as it stood on an eminence, the air was considered much purer than in the flat below, which was hemmed in by surrounding rising grounds. The difficulty lay in the moving. For some days the change was delayed, from the doctor really being unable to suggest any method sufficiently easy ; when, one morning, the sturdy dissenter arrived at the parsonage door, himself drawing a carriage he had had built at considerable cost, in London, for his son, who being crippled from an injury of the spine, must always be in a recumbent posture, and was often a great sufferer. This carriage contained an air mattress on a false bottom, by which means the invalid, without any exertion of his own, could

be carried and laid in the carriage, the springs of which were so contrived as to cause scarcely a perceptible motion. He had hurried the arrival of this carriage, on Mrs. Stanhope's account, and he now came to offer it for her use, saying it would be the greatest gratification to his boy to think it was of service to her. Nothing could be more opportune. The false bottom, with the mattress on, was placed on a level with Eva's bed, and she was lifted by the sheet on it. Covered with her bed-clothes, her baby by her side, she was transported to the Castle with as little inconvenience as if still in bed.

As soon as Eva was disposed of, the family at the Castle came out to see the contrivance of the carriage. Its ingenuity received great admiration; the owner, who had accompanied it, was in great request to explain, and he was invited into the house-steward's room to take some refreshment. Flattered at the consequence he was of, and gratified at having been of benefit to one who had done so much for his boy, he felt in better humour with church-people, and entertained kindlier feelings towards aristocracy than he had ever done in his life; and when he sat by his afflicted boy, giving him an account of

all, he felt a more amiable, and consequently, happier man, than he had often done.

It was early spring, but the weather was very mild and soft. Every day that was warm enough, the cripple's carriage came up to the Castle to take Eva and her baby an airing along the smooth terrace walks. The change had been of great service to Eva ; her strength began to rally from the first, and she was soon able to have her clothes put on, and lie on the sofa in her dressing-room, where her kind hosts were used to come and sit with her as much as it was considered advisable. When she found herself able to go out in the carriage, she wished to return home ; but that, neither Charles nor the Hiltons would listen to : both knew she was much better off where she was. Charles had a general invitation there ; but, though he came up every day to see his wife, he never could be induced to remain.

“ Dear Charles, I want to go home and take care of you,” said Eva to him one day. He had come up while she was out on the terrace, and she had made him draw her car close to a seat beneath an acacia tree, where he could sit beside her and talk. Charles looked with fond admiration at the loving eloquence of that dark eye :

more than usually bright and large as it appeared in the wasted face. "I think it is I who should have to take care of you, just now," he said, with a sad smile.

"No, indeed, I am getting quite well and strong now, and you look thinner every time I see you: I am sure you are eating nothing."

"Indeed, I am, love. I take very good care of myself; but I make Sultan eat a good deal of grass these idle times."

"Why don't you ride him?"

"He is more torment to me than anything else: unless for a very long distance, I would rather walk. But Ryan said it was no use his gorging himself when he had nothing to do, so he is turned out every morning. Between himself and the pig, Ryan says no grass goes to waste."

"Ryan cannot have much to do, himself, these times."

"He looks after your flowers. I desired him get a gardener to see that they did not die, and he said he minded them himself equal to any gardener. I see him lugging crocks about half the day."

"How kind of you to think of my flowers! But Charles, I should like to go home. I know you would look better if I were there."

"No, love, you must stay here, since Lady Hilton is kind enough to wish it. Think how lonely you would be, chained to a sofa all day long, while I am out."

"I should have baby for company," said the young mother, with a smile very winning in its proud fondness.

"You should be nurse, turn about, I think," said Charles, smiling too ; "one is about as well able for it as the other. You must not fancy I want you, Eva. Norah takes very good care of me ; always has something savoury for dinner : then Mrs. Andrews comes down now and again to see after things ; and I am often asked out to dinner, and I sometimes go : so you see, on the whole, I am rather enjoying my bachelor's life. His smile did not deceive her."

"I am afraid the exchequer is in a sad way, love. How much did the strange doctor charge ?"

"Thirty guineas."

"It is a great deal of money."

"That strange doctor, under Providence, saved your life, my Eva : he was well worth thirty guineas to me."

"And 45*l.* we have to pay the publisher. That will be over 75*l.* we must make up this year. I

was thinking of speaking to you about selling Sultan; we could do without a horse for a while."

" You will want him when you come back. Don't worry yourself about money. The sale of my book has exceeded my expectations ; it will satisfy the publisher. Now don't look so eager, or I cannot tell you any more."

" Do tell me about it ; it will do me good."

" The book has had a great sale ; the publisher would have been paid off now, but that I was obliged to draw on the proceeds for the doctor's thirty guineas. Lord Hilton kindly offered me any sum I wanted, as a loan ; but I would rather not borrow unless compelled. The work has been favourably reviewed in the 'Edinburgh,' and the publisher writes that before the year is out every clergyman in England will have a copy."

" How very pleasant ! I am sorry, love, one was not sent to the Bishop."

" I have had a letter from him inquiring if I was the Mr. Stanhope who wrote it. I replied in the affirmative, and said I should have begged his lordship's acceptance of a copy, but that I had been so harassed by your illness, I could attend to nothing but what was absolutely necessary.

I received a very kind answer, which I will bring to-morrow for you to read. He speaks very highly of the book, expresses great concern about your illness, and says he has heard that in the midst of private troubles my public duties have not suffered any neglect. So, Eva dear, though I have had sorrows, I have had blessings also."

"God is very good," murmured Eva, thankfully. She turned her face languidly against the pillow, and, wearied with talking, sank into a gentle doze. Charles covered her up carefully and pulled out a book.

Eva had long been promised that as soon as she was well enough to walk she should be taken home. One day, when Charles came up to pay his daily visit, he found her making a very tardy progress along one of the terraces, leaning on Lord St. John's arm ; who seemed in no hurry to part with his burden when her husband advanced to relieve him. From that day Charles began to think, perhaps a change to her home might now be of use to his wife, and he delighted her very much by giving her permission to return.

When Ryan found she was coming, he made a surreptitious excursion to the Castle gardens to fill up death vacancies.

Both the Cliftons and Mrs. Herbert called, after Eva had been a short time re-established in her home; but Charles, who happened to be indoors when they came, remembering how much they had formerly upset his wife by coming to lunch, sent to say she was too weak to receive them: a message which gave Mrs. Herbert great umbrage, as, at the very time she was sent away, Lady Hilton's carriage was standing at the door. With a great elevation of the lip, she told Mr. Herbert, on her return home, how she had been treated; adding sneeringly that she supposed Eva only received grand acquaintances now. Ambitious as she was about her relations, she never seemed elated at any grandeur of Eva's.

"If you take my advice," replied Mr. Herbert, "you will leave the Stanhopes where they are. They don't intend being friends with us, and in running after them you only get snubbed."

"I am sure, Edward, I can't think how you can call it running after them. I merely called in common charity."

"A charity which they would rather be without can scarcely be called one."

"It had such a strange appearance in the country, my having nothing to say to her. People have

made such a fuss about her! One would think no one was ever ill before! The Hiltons were ridiculous. Very likely want to uphold the Church, among all those dissenters. Their noticing the clergyman will make the townspeople think more of him."

It seemed as if the conclusion arrived at, that Eva was not made much of for her own sake, was rather consolatory to Mrs. Herbert: her upper lip dropped, and the rigidity of her features' hard outline slackened. Very contradictory all this; yet it is sometimes seen in this world of ours. All her life Mrs. Herbert had been wishing a higher social ascendancy for her own family, now, the ascent of a member of it seemed to give her considerable dissatisfaction; the key to which was that Mrs. Herbert was too selfish to endure being surpassed. She wished her relations still to be subordinate to herself, and their position to be a credit to her; but to stop short of her own. Eva's beauty, and the interest she excited, threw her, she felt, into the shade; while Charles's talents and energies seemed almost a reproach to Mr. Herbert. She often felt as angry with them, for coming and surpassing her, as she had ever done with the Edward Phillips', for coming and disgracing her.

Eva, who had the use of an easy Bath-chair from the Castle, wished to make a round of visits to the parishioners, to thank them for their kindness during her illness ; but Charles objected to her first thanks not being laid at the foot of that Throne from whence mercy had come : therefore, the visits were postponed until she had regained sufficient strength to bear the exertion of going to church. Many dissenters, who had not been inside the walls of a church for years, went there the day it was known she was to return thanks ; and when there, were so enchain'd by Charles's powerful reasoning, that they not unfrequently went again : a practice which with some became confirmed.

Eva did not pass one door in Hilton ; at the poorest as well as the richest her Bath-chair stopped. It took some days to go round them. Charles was with her, giving a gentle caution to those who came forth, to receive her thanks without saying anything to agitate her. When she came to the cripple's door, he would be carried out to see her, and tears came into his eyes when she put into his her thin white hand, through which you could almost see, and told him of what service his car had been to her. She asked to see his carving, and had brought him some new patterns and

materials. While she talked to him, Charles conversed with his father in his usual sensible, conciliating way, and when they were gone, the sturdy opponent of church and aristocracy said he was a nice free-spoken young fellow, not a bit stuck up by the call he got at the Castle, and some day or other he would go down to the church just to see for himself if he was as good in the pulpit as people said.

Eva made several visits to the sewed muslin school, and had the girls and their work out round her chair to be examined. She was disappointed in their progress. Though she was aware there was less embroidery capability in English fingers than in the Irish, still the advancement was slower than she had expected, and she found it would be necessary to keep on the professional mistress for another six months, to make the effort of any effectual good. Raising the funds was the next thing to be done. The parish came forward liberally, and all was soon collected, except 5*l.*, which Eva herself added. She returned the finished work to the factory, and received the price of it, which she paid the young workers from her Bath-chair one fine morning in the early summer.

CHAPTER XII.

MARRIED FOR GOLD.

A YEAR passed away—passed away quickly : each day cementing still more strongly the kindly union between the curate of Hilton and his wife on the one side and the inhabitants of his parish on the other. Charles Stanhope worked hard; from morning till night, time and attention were devoted to the necessities and interests of his parishioners: attending the schools, ministering to the sick, bettering the social condition of the working classes, seeing into, and ameliorating, as far as lay in his power, the destitution of the poor, conciliating seceders, christianising unbelievers, and awakening the careless who did believe, took up the day, while a great part of the night was spent at his desk. Humbly but unflinchingly he walked in the path of duty, and not one, even among the Church's most bitter enemies, raised a voice against the mild and conscientious curate.

Eva assisted in gentle offices of love and mercy ; helping where it might be ; soothing, with sincere sympathy, where it might not. And the little Eva Mary lent her tiny help by the interest she excited. She was a most lovely child, rather small than robust, but so angelic in her delicate beauty it was hard to believe her but a little mortal. Her skin was so transparent one might imagine they saw the blood flow through the blue veins beneath it; her fair hair curled in slender locks, looking like a fringe of golden floss silk round her smiling infantine face. But, like her mother, the chief charm lay in her eyes. Different as they were in hue, they had the same expression, the same *spirituelle* look in their soft brightness ; deeper in the mother's dark orbs, more innocent in the young blue eyes of the child. In the little Eva it was natural, in the mother it was the wane of a more brilliant light. That look of sparkling vivacity, which had once been the predominant expression of her face, had never been seen to flash across it, by those who knew her best, since it had dropped from it that long past day at Oakstone ; when, coming into the drawing-room puzzled at his absence, she had seen Ernest

standing by the fire, and for the first time recognised the suspicion that he was *changed*.

But to return to the little Eva. She was looked on as almost public property ; she was taken about from house to house ; she was caressed, petted, and had presents made to her by the whole town. Even mothers acknowledged she was the loveliest child in the country ; and pride flushed with pink Eva's pale cheek at their praises of her darling's beauty. Charles idolized the little atom who had so nearly cost him what was dearer to him than his own life : he did not remember it against her, and he believed her to be infant perfection. Once or twice he had been obliged to go to London to see his publisher ; and Eva took these occasions to ask Miss Boare to come and see her little god-daughter : Charles preferring Miss Boare being in the house when he was out of it. Strange as it may seem, it was a kind of pleasure to Eva that her husband did not like Miss Boare, because Ernest Clifton had not liked her.

Of her relations Eva saw little or nothing. The Herberts did not repeat their visits. The Cliftons called occasionally ; but as they discovered, from the tenor of Eva's manner, that all hope of re-establishing their former intimacy was

at an end, their visits became more distant. In these visits Ernest's name was never mentioned, nor any allusion made to him, nor, indeed, by any other visitors at the parsonage; it seemed a subject tacitly avoided. Before her own illness Eva had been aware that one part of the gipsy's prophecy was likely to be unfulfilled, but the result she had never known; she had always shrunk from inquiry.

One day she was looking after the children, while the nurse performed some office below stairs, when Mrs. Andrews came up to the nursery. The children, I say, for a little girl of Edward Phillips's about three years of age was amusing herself with a rag doll at her feet, as she sat sewing by her infant's cradle. This was a delicate child, who, having recently had an inflammatory attack on its lungs, had never been able to recover its strength, and the doctor ordered change of air as the best means of restoring it. When the remedy prescribed became known among Edward's Wiltshire relatives, they seemed to think it incumbent on them to make some excuse for not holding out a helping hand, and receiving the poor little invalid. Mrs. Herbert said she really would take the child for a fort-

night, only for Mr. Herbert: she could not think of asking him to endure the annoyance of so young a child; she could not spare Grimshawe to attend to it, and she was sure the housemaid would object to having it put under her charge: sick children took an immensity of attendance. Besides, she had no children's cots; the one Willie Ingram had used had been sent to a sale in the neighbourhood and sold, and she had no place for the child to sleep, even if she could manage it in the day. What argument could be more satisfactory to any one's conscience, that it was an impossibility and could not be done?

Mr. Clifton said he could not take it at all; there was a great anxiety in having the charge of a delicate child away from its parents. If they liked to come to Oakstone for a couple of days, and bring it with them, they were welcome; but a sickly child was quite too great a responsibility for him to take upon himself. Besides, he understood the little invalid was ordered to be constantly in the air, and there was no one there who could be continually out with a child; it was a thing they could not manage. So the poor little baby was likely to go without the remedy which would have been most beneficial to it, had

not Eva accidentally become acquainted with the circumstance. She drove over to Brackley the next day and brought little Mysie back with her in the carriage. She made a bed for her in a large clothes-basket, which she emptied of its contents for the purpose, and had it put every night by the side of her own bed. She paid two-pence a day to a boy to bring a donkey for an hour, for the child to ride out with the nurse who carried Eva Mary, and she took it out in the carriage with herself whenever she went either to drive or to pay a morning visit.

“Where there’s a will there’s a way ;” said Mrs. Andrews, who being a bit of a gossip, knew all about it from Mrs. Bloomfield’s cook, who was an aunt of the Edward Phillips’s children’s maid.

Mrs. Andrews, since Eva’s illness, had been a privileged person at the parsonage; she often came to see the baby, and always received a welcome admittance into the nursery. When she entered on this day, Eva was employed in making a pelisse for little Mysie out of one of the numerous cloaks her own baby had been presented with; (poor Mary Phillips’s fit-out not being very presentable:) and it happened, the while, that her thoughts wandered to Grimstone Priory.

Summoning courage to broach a painful subject, she led Mrs. Andrews to speak of the Ernest Cliftons, without appearing to be as much in ignorance of recent events as she really was.

"Poor Mr. Clifton! If he had had the child itself 'twould be a comfort to him," said Mrs. Andrews, after some remark of Eva's.

Eva's lip whitened and quivered. She was afraid to betray ignorance lest her informant should draw back. Since her illness she had often been aware that things were withheld from her. She said,

"I never knew exactly how long the poor, little thing lived."

"None at all, ma'am! 'Twas dead when 'twas born."

Eva turned her face away, her eyes fell on her own sleeping babe so lovely in repose; tears filled them.

"How is it with the mother?" she asked after a while. It was the father who was in her thought, though it was for the mother she inquired.

"'Deed, ma'am, I haven't heard as how she has got on since she was put into the 'sylum."

Eva's hand dropped upon her lap—her lips parted—her eyes almost started from their sockets.

"What!" she exclaimed, in a voice of such piercing agony that it frightened old Mrs. Andrews.

"Dear ma'am, don't take on so! What have I been and done? I'm sure I thought you knew when you asked me, or I'd never have opened my lips about it. For God's sake don't look so, ma'am! 'Twas a mistake I made: she's better."

"No, no," said Eva, with a sickly smile, "that will not deceive me. Tell me all about it and I shall be more content. I will promise to be calm. Do tell me, Mrs. Andrews."

"Well, lie down on the bed, for you look next door to dead, and I'll tell you all I know about it. No use trying to hide it now the murder is out."

Eva suffered herself to be led to the nurse's bed and lay down upon it. Leaving her cold hand in the kind clasp of her humble friend's, she turned her sad face towards her and listened to her tale.

Mrs. Clifton had been confined much about the same time as Eva. She was very ill, and the baby was lost. For many days she continued to rave: this, at first, was supposed to be but

puerperal delirium, but gradually it became more settled, and fears were entertained that it was the development of the hereditary disease; which at last broke out so malignantly that she was perfectly unmanageable. As it was absolutely necessary to have her under restraint, she had been placed in a private asylum, whose reputation for care and kindness to such unfortunates was well known. How she had fared since she had been in it, Mrs. Andrews did not know.

Eva listened in silence, and her thoughts went back to the long forgotten gipsy.

“Poor Ernest!” she almost involuntarily ejaculated.

“Poor Mr. Clifton, indeed! Often my heart ached for him; and it’s often I said to Andrews, if those meddlers would but have let things alone it’s yerself he’d have now: yerself and your beautiful baby ——”

“Oh! do not, do not, Mrs. Andrews!” exclaimed Eva, unable to endure more.

“That’s what Andrews says to me; says he, when I lament, ‘Don’t be wishing to have things different. She’s got better than him.’ And I say, ‘May be Mr. Stanhope may be cleverer at book-learning, very like he is; but

Mr. Clifton was a born beauty to look at, and so nice and so good.' It's no use talking; I never can help wishing ye two had been married. Often I said to Andrews, them had no heart as parted ye: ye were made for each other, both so beautiful and so humble; and oh dear, oh dear! see what they did for him!"

Eva turned her face in towards the pillow, and wept long and bitterly; the bed shook with her convulsive grief. Mrs. Andrews, afraid she would injure herself, tried all she could to comfort her, to undo what she had done. She brought the baby from its cradle, and laid it in her bosom, and bade her think of it.

Eva clasped it passionately to her breast, and cried over it until she was too exhausted to cry any more. Then she lay still and sad, Mrs. Andrews sitting beside her, trying to give her thoughts another turn; in her heart, condemning unmeasurably those who had divided her two favorites.

Meanwhile Charles came home, and not finding his wife in the sitting-room, came to look for her where she was not unfrequently to be found. Mrs. Andrews took advantage of his coming to slip away.

"Eva, you have been crying," said her husband. "What is the matter?"

She raised herself from the bed, and motioning to him to sit beside her, laid her head against his breast, and wept gently.

"Let me cry, dear Charles, it does me good: I have been shocked and grieved."

"Has Mrs. Andrews been telling you anything agitating?" Charles asked angrily.

"No, dearest; at least, it was not her fault, she thought I knew. But I never had heard that Ernest Clifton's wife had been so unfortunate."

"Going mad," said Charles, who little dreamed how much it cost Eva to say, "Ernest Clifton's wife."

"Yes, dear," said his wife, mournfully. "She has lost both her baby and her reason."

"What she ever had of it: it was not much; was it?"

"I do not know: I never knew of it until now, and it has shocked me greatly."

"It was for fear of shocking you, that we kept the knowledge from you. When I first heard it you were very ill, and I charged every one not to mention it, and so did the doctor. I was aware that you knew very little about her, but anything

of the kind shocks when the nerves are weak. It was the money, I suppose; but she was a strange choice for Clifton to make: splendid looking fellow like him; and sensible, apparently." Here the little Eva awoke, and began struggling and holding out her arms to be taken up; Charles lifted her with a tender smile.

"We have to thank God for leaving us our darling, Eva," he said.

Eva sighed an assent; but, for many a day, the thought of Ernest's desolate hearth never for one moment left her heart. Many bitter tears she shed over it. Often when her own baby was sleeping in her arms, her thoughts would sadden for the happiness which was denied to him. Oh, gold! gold! He had married for gold, and what had it done for him? With his warm heart, his domestic tendencies, his yearning for confidence and companionship, his need of sympathy and cheering influence—an empty house, a lonely hearth, a widowed bed, a childless life.

And how did Agnes feel now? Was this the future she had foreseen for that loved brother, whom she had so studiously endeavoured to save from the misfortune of wedding his portionless cousin? He could live in Oakstone now, and could

keep it up in style. "There were no nursery claims upon his purse. Three hundred a year was all he need spare, from the large income she had bestowed on him, for the keeping of his lunatic wife. His friends ought to be satisfied.

However bitterly Eva thought of his friends, tenderly and mournfully she thought of himself; forgiving his faithlessness and pitying his misfortunes with the deep unconquerable mercy of a woman's love. Of all those who had struggled for his advancement, and now mourned the result, there was not one whose heart was so pain-wrung by the contemplation as hers; which he had once possessed himself of and cast aside again, and over whose young life he had thrown a shadow, which no prosperity, or happiness, or even blessings, had ever entirely dispersed. The wound of love wrenched as hers had been can never be effaced; it is carried to the grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREFERMENT.

CHARLES's next labour in the field of literature was a work on the philosophy of the mind, compiled principally from the detached papers he had written before his marriage, and from notes of his reading of a still earlier period. It was his favourite study, and the work displayed great literary ability as well as acute penetration into the mysteries of the recondite science. He wished to dedicate it to his old college tutor, under whom he had acquired so much of his ethical knowledge ; but when he named it to his wife, she urged his paying the Bishop the compliment of the dedication, as under him he was now to work, and from him he had to look for advancement. He took her advice, though it cost him a sigh to resign the old tutor for his own interest.

The sale did not equal that of Charles's former book ; though by its profound erudition, sagacious reasoning, and the analytical precision of its de-

ductions, it raised the author's name even higher as a scholar and a thinker.

Eva's tale had also met with extraordinary success. It was most highly spoken of in reviews and universally read. The publisher wrote to offer her an engagement as a contributor to a serial he was setting up; but this, Charles's solicitude for her health would not suffer her to accept.

She was a second time about to become a mother; and Charles's wistful anxiety was not to be wondered at, considering the circumstances of the former event. He arranged with the Bristol doctor to come at a moment's notice, and made every provision his foresight could suggest to be prepared for the worst. His precautions were happily unnecessary. Without more than the ordinary allowance of suffering which falls to woman's lot, Eva gave birth to a fine boy.

About a fortnight before this event, Mr. Griffin, the rector of Reddestone, had been attacked by a fever which soon showed symptoms that created alarm; and eventually his life was despaired of. Independently of a feeling of friendship for an individual to whom they were indebted for an act of kindness, the Stanhopes naturally felt a good deal of anxiety regarding the issue; as his death would

in all probability deprive Charles of the curacy of Hilton.

The day before their boy's birth Mr. Griffin died, and Charles's joy at the one event was much chastened by regret for the other. He was sitting alone in the parlour the next evening when his little Eva toddled into the room and up to his side. She looked very forlorn; as the superseded baby always does. She had no longer mamma's lap to nestle in; her nurse was busy with the little stranger; she was forbidden to make a noise; neglected and uncared for she was free to stray whither she would; she was no longer the pet of the nursery: she was a queen deposed. And with a dejected, discontented little face, she had wandered into the parlour to try if there was any welcome for her there.

Charles was glad of her company; for he, too, felt forlorn. He was not sure that he was not a curate deposed. He lifted the child into his lap, and they mutually caressed each other; the touch of the soft warm little arms round his neck felt very soothing. When he expatiated to her on the blessing of having a little brother, she appeared to think it rather a dubious one, and in her almost unintelligible infantine prattle, she

bargained to be “Pa’s baby.” With many kisses he completed the bargain, and she slept in his bed that night.

When his boy was but three days old, Charles received a letter which, from the overcasting of his brow while reading it, appeared to contain very unpalatable intelligence. It was from Edward Phillips, informing him that the living of Hilton had been bestowed on him by the Bishop. It was a kind and considerate letter: the much longer time the writer had worked in the diocese than Charles was delicately alluded to, and it went on to say, that as his present term of engagement would not end for three months, he hoped, if it suited Charles’s convenience to continue as he was until its expiration, that he would do so. Should an eligible offer meanwhile present itself he was free to accept it.

Charles was very downhearted at the contents of this letter; Hilton being a small living, he had had some undefined hope floating through his mind that it was not impossible the Bishop might appoint him to it; as otherwise his ministry there must end, and his conscience told him it was working well. Independent of its pecuniary loss —for he could not hope to obtain so lucrative

a curacy again — he regretted separation from Hilton. He had been so happy there ; he was attached to the parsonage, to the town, to the scenery among which his parish lay, and through which so many of his journeys had been taken, and to the people. He felt it would take time to form new ties. There was an anxiety, too, lest he might not be suited quickly ; for having a wife and two children makes a man keenly consider his means, and Charles's depended almost entirely on his employment. In any depression of mind he always found consolation in consulting with Eva ; this he was now precluded from doing, and he felt the loss. When he went into her room, she asked him if he had heard anything of the livings.

“ I have not been up the town yet,” was his evasive answer.

“ You ought to take a walk up, and inquire if anything is known. I am very anxious to hear.”

“ I will ; but I do not think it is likely to be known yet.”

“ I suppose you wrote to tell the Bishop about baby ?”

“ Yes : wrote yesterday. I must go now ; I have a long day’s work before me.”

“ What are you going to do ?”

“ In the first place, to try and settle that dispute between Wall and Paxton : they have made me umpire, and I am to hear both sides of the case to-day ; then I have to take your clothing club, and to audit the school accounts ; to visit some sick, and administer the sacrament to one man. In the evening I have to lecture at the Institute on St. Paul’s travels : that is no hardship, as I am well up on the subject.”

“ Will you be back for some luncheon ?”

“ No ; I shall not come here from the school at all ; but go straight on. I want to catch the railway men at their dinner-time, and talk a little to them.”

“ Take a sandwich in your pocket, Charles.”

“ Good-bye, love.”

He stooped to kiss her.

“ Do, to please me, darling,” she whispered.

“ Do what ?”

“ Take something to eat with you.”

“ I am never hungry when I am out and busy ; but I will take a crust of something ; so don’t let me have you fretting yourself, and thinking I am starving.”

“ You often are, Charles.”

" You know the Bishop likes thin people." A sigh belied the gaiety he affected.

While this scene was passing in the curate's home, let us take a peep at what was going on in the Bishop's palace.

Within it, in a room large in its dimensions, and handsome in its architectural adornments, but rigidly plain, almost eremitic in its furniture, was seated the Bishop. No one who contemplated him could accuse his lordship of preaching to his clergy a self-denial that he did not practise.

On a small table near stood the remains of his frugal breakfast; a cup of milk and water and some oaten cakes. On the square oak-table at which he was seated, and which was uncovered by any cloth, were piles of books and papers, arranged in some kind of order; and these he appeared to be compiling from a heterogeneous mixture which strewed the uncarpeted floor around him. Acts of Parliament, manuscript sermons, letters, proof-sheets of a work he was editing for the press, reports of societies, books of reference on every subject, littered the ground; in what, perhaps, appeared more confusion to a stranger entering the room than to the occupant who had placed them there. The door gently opened,

and a young man, habited as a clergyman, whose hollow cheeks looked as if they would require some more generous fare than what was likely to be obtained in his diocesan's palace to fill them healthily, looked in.

"The Archdeacon of Wilts has come, my lord. Will you see him?"

"Yes: tell him to come in. And Mr. Gwynne, you need not send that letter to the curate of Hilton. I will write to him myself."

The secretary bowed and withdrew to the anteroom where he sat and wrote, and where the Archdeacon was now waiting.

The greater dignitary received the lesser with grave courtesy, and inquired if he had breakfasted.

"Yes, my lord, I am an early riser," replied the Archdeacon; who being of a sufficiently meagre habit not to need any further voucher of his abstemiousness, seldom partook of a meal at the palace.

"So am I," said the Bishop, "I have been at work since four o'clock this morning; but I breakfast late: I find the mind work better when the animal portion is not clogged with repletion." He drew his thin hand across his pale and furrowed brow, as if to clear away any mists the weight of his breakfast might have induced upon his brain.

The Archdeacon wondered what that spare body knew of repletion ; but starvation was the Bishop's hobby, and he liked to ride it.

He now turned to the subject on which he had summoned his guest's presence, and for some time both were engaged in reading over documents and consulting thereon. When they had finished, the Archdeacon alluded to Mr. Griffin's death.

" Yes, poor Griffin suddenly received an awful summons," replied the Bishop : " I trust he was prepared. He was not as hard-working a parish clergyman as I could wish ; the staple error—too great fondness of creature comforts ; but he made amends by supplying able substitutes, and paid them liberally."

" His death has thrown some desirable preferment into your lordship's hands."

" Yes ; it will give me an opportunity of affording two zealous servants a wider field of usefulness in their Master's cause."

" I have been delegated to petition your lordship for one."

" Which ? "

" Reddestone."

" Who wishes to have Reddestone ? "

" Mr. Herbert of Hislop."

"Tell Mr. Herbert of Hislop that Reddestone is given away."

The Archdeacon tried not to appear as much surprised as he really was.

"While I am father of the church in Salisbury diocese," continued the Bishop, "Mr. Herbert, if I can help it, shall never have the cure of one soul more than those he now neglects. On what merit, I wonder, does he found his claim?"

"I believe on that of long standing in the diocese."

"I look to what a man does in his life, not to how long he lives. If I judged merely from Mr. Herbert's appearance, I should conclude that he was rather too adipose a subject for one who conscientiously went through the weekly duty of a parish, even of the extent of his: but I have something more than mere circumstantial evidence."

"If he got Reddestone, he intended to keep on the curate, who understands the parish, having worked it for nearly three years."

"And Mr. Herbert would sit eating and sleeping in the rectory, or taking the air in his carriage. No, no, Archdeacon; the man who has got Reddestone is not too fat or lazy to work it himself, and to work it well."

"Your lordship has actually bestowed it then?"

"Virtually. I gave Mr. Gwynne a note of it last night, and he would have written to-day to convey the intelligence; but I had a letter from Mr. Stanhope this morning announcing the birth of a son, to whom I am under a promise to stand sponsor, and I recalled the note, intending to write to him myself."

"Then Mr. Stanhope is to have Reddestone!"

"Yes :" (seeing his puzzled air) "is there any just cause or impediment?"

"None, my lord: you of course know best. But he is so young, and a stranger! The seniors will be malcontent."

"No doubt: each one thinks how much he should have liked it himself. Archdeacon, I will show neither favour nor affection: deal with men by their merits, and from one end of the diocese to the other, I do not think there is one man so eligible for the appointment as Charles Stanhope. Look at Hilton after two years' occupation by him! See how the schools have prospered, the societies been aided, the congregation increased, the dissenters conciliated, and, in many instances, won over, the sick visited and relieved, and every labour that was calculated to better the social

condition and elevate the moral standard of the people, assiduously promoted. That working school which I assisted Mrs. Stanhope to establish, and in which she has most ably carried out my views, now gives remunerative employment to dozens of female children, who otherwise would be imbibing the demoralization of idleness. I know more of even the domestic history of my clergy than the vicar of Hislop thinks. I know that when his wife was so ill, and there were heavy demands upon a slender purse, that Charles Stanhope was used to dine off a herring, and carry the chickens and jellies sent for his wife, who was too ill to use them, to the sick poor. I had that from Lord Hilton himself; and when I was at Ash Park, Mrs. Bloomfield told me that when Mr. Phillips's sick child wanted change of air, the Stanhopes were the only relations he had who could make room to take her."

" Hilton has been fortunate in its clergy," remarked the Archdeacon.

" I had no fault to find with Mr. Clifton," said the Bishop; " he was a perfect gentleman, high principled, charitable, and did not spare his labour; but his work was that of an automaton, not a mind."

" He was a good practical clergyman. One

does not often meet with brilliant talents such as Mr. Stanhope's."

" And that he has cultivated them very carefully may be seen by his works. In the last, particularly, which he has paid me the compliment of associating my name with, he has handled his subjects with a masterly hand."

" Hilton will have a loss in him."

" No doubt you will feel the repairing of it. I have given Hilton to your curate."

" Phillips ? "

" Yes : he ought to have had the letter yesterday."

" He may have had it ; I have not been at home since the day before : your lordship's letter followed me to Hilton Castle, where I was, and I came straight from it. I shall regret Phillips : he is a scholar with many virtues, and works himself to the bone ; but is the most absent, untidy, unpractical man I ever met with in my life."

" It is often the case that scholastic abilities and worldly wisdom do not go together. It would seem as if concentrating the mind on the one, took from the other its share. It has not been so with Stanhope : he seems equal to his work on all sides. Had he not put Hilton into the training he has, I

should not have put Phillips there ; but arranged for him as it is, I think he has both the ability and the will to carry on what has originated with his predecessor."

" He will not spare himself; I will answer for that, though I won't answer for his always having his wits about him. A week ago he set fire to the bed-curtains when reading in bed, and nearly burnt the house ; and I called there the day before I went to Hilton Castle and found a pretty commotion. It seemed he had turned the cock of a beer-barrel which he had in a little room he sits in, intending to draw off a jug for an ailing man who had come there ; but he was so intent on some calculations that he forgot all about it. When his wife came in, he was sitting in a flood of beer, and could neither hear nor see. She pulled him out of it, and he sat down on the baby she had laid in an arm-chair and nearly squeezed its life out," and the Archdeacon laughed with a most undignified heartiness. The Bishop smiled : he was a scholar himself, or he would not have been so lenient to scholastic abstraction.

" I am glad," continued the Archdeacon, " for Phillips's good fortune, even if it be my loss ; and he is a loss, spill the beer how he will. And so,

my lord, I am to take to Mr. Herbert the reply you have given me ? ”

“ Yes: and now for your own satisfaction, listen. About six or seven years ago, when I first refused the living of Reddestone to Mr. Herbert, I told him he was not a sufficiently active clergyman. I thought he would take warning and mend his ways. Well, about two years ago, I was passing through the neighbourhood of Hislop, and thinking I would see for myself whether my hint had been acted on, I left my carriage on the road, and walked up the lane to the schoolhouse Mrs. Herbert is for ever lauding her husband for having built out of his own pocket; but it is, in effect, a dwelling-house on a small farm he has purchased; and if he left the parish to-morrow, he would turn out the scholars, if there were any in, and put a tenant to live in the schoolhouse. On my way there, I turned into a cottage which is about half way up the lane. There was a sick woman in it. I sat down by her bed and talked to her; of which she seemed glad: said it was a comfort to her. I asked—

“ ‘ Does not Mr. Herbert sometimes pay you a visit?’

“‘Deed, no, sir, he doesna come this way, unless may be in the shootin’ time, he passes on his pony; but he always has quality with him them times, and couldna stop.’

“‘Have you no older children than these?’ I asked: there were a couple, mere infants, on the floor.

“‘Deed, sir, I have six in all: the boy’s out with his feyther, and t’ other’s at school.’

“‘Are there many children at Hislop school now?’ said I.

“‘Deed, no, I b’lieve not, sir. ‘Tis na there as mine go, ’tis to Chesbury.’

“‘Is not Hislop your parish?’

“‘They doan’t learn much at Hislop. You see, the master’s no good, and he has no one to look after him. I took mine away; they warn’t learnin’ nothing.’

“I went on to the school, to see if *I* could learn something: a desolate looking barn of a place it was, not half-lighted. How many children do you suppose I found there?”

“I have not an idea my lord.”

“Three! and one was an infant in the arms of another, a girl, of about twelve, I should say. The master was absent. They could give me no

account of him, except that he had not come there since his dinner.

“‘ At what hour does he dine ? ’

“‘ Twelve o’clock.’

“ It was three, very nearly, when I was there. I went on to a cottage which seemed a very poor one. In it I found a corpse—a man who had died the night before. I inquired what spiritual attendance he had had, and found the dissenting minister had been with him just before his death. On questioning the wife (or widow, I should say) it appeared that she had sent ten days before to ask Mr. Herbert to come and see her husband. Mr. Herbert was getting into his carriage to go out to dinner, and told the messenger he could not attend to him until morning. The following day Mrs. Herbert had come on her pony, saw the man, and read a chapter from a book to him. She sent him some broth afterwards, and there her civility ended. The woman said she was loath to send to Mr. Herbert again, she did not like to be troublesome, and it was a poor place for him to come to. But some of the neighbours told the minister at the chapel, and he came every other day and prayed with the dying man.

“ Now, Archdeacon, have you heard enough of

Mr. Herbert's qualifications for being unfit for the living of Reddestone? for if you have not, I can go on. After I had regained my carriage, and travelled a little way further in the direction of the vicarage, I came to a farmyard, where thrashing and a great deal of business was going on.

“‘ Whose farmyard is this ? ’ I asked.

“‘ The Rev. Mr. Herbert’s, sir,’ replied a respectable-looking man, who appeared to be a bailiff or something of the kind.

“‘ He must have a good-sized farm by what I see here; does he make well by it?’

“‘ Deed, no sir, he says not ; he says he loses, and that he only keeps it on because he *wants occupation.*’”

His lordship made no comment; the Archdeacon no reply. In a few moments the latter rose to go.

“ Will you not stay for lunch? mine will soon come in,” said the Bishop.

The Archdeacon glanced at the remains of the breakfast.

“ No thank you, my lord. I never eat between breakfast and dinner.”

The next morning, the curate of Hilton received

a letter, which from the transition of his countenance before he had read a dozen lines, seemed to have a very contrary effect on him to that of the preceding day. His eyes devoured it with avidity, almost starting out of his head. He rushed up to his wife's room. But when he got to the door he checked himself; she must not be agitated: it might be too much for her to hear. He was rector of Reddestone! He went down again, looking disappointed. He read the letter over and over. He could hardly believe his eyesight; doubted and believed by turns. But it was in the Bishop's own hand-writing; there could be no mistake. Could he have put the wrong letter in the envelope? but no, on the same page were congratulations for his boy: it must be true. The rectory of Reddestone and 600*l.* a-year were his. He put his hand to his side; the excess of joy was absolutely pain; he was wild with delight. He rushed up and down the room with agitated strides, caught up his little Eva in his arms, and frightened her with the violence of his kisses; all the time telling her news that she could not comprehend. He must tell some one. It was long before he was calm enough to thank God.

That was a day of great restlessness to Charles.

He so longed to share his joy with his wife, yet feared to do it. In the evening he told her it was reported through the town that Edward Phillips would be likely to get the living of Hilton.

“If he does,” replied Eva, “we shall have to move. He will not keep a curate.”

“I suppose not.”

“I am sure, Charles,” said his wife, encouragingly, “the Bishop will not see you unemployed: if he gives Edward this living he will provide for you elsewhere. Perhaps you might succeed whoever gets Reddestone; I wonder who is likely to?”

He longed to tell, but he restrained himself.

“Nothing was known about Reddestone when I went into the town this morning,” he replied: “I wish they would give it to me.”

“Dear Charles,” said his wife, raising herself on the pillows and looking tenderly at him, “who would have expected that ambitious speech from you? Some day, no doubt, you will get a good living, but it is too soon yet. How happy we have been on a curacy!”

The next day he told her the report was true; that Edward Phillips had been given Hilton, and that he also was provided for.

"Where? With what?" was the eager inquiry.

"Will you promise not to be excited if I tell you?"

"Yes, I will. I will be quite still and quiet. Do tell me—quick, Charles!" seeing he hesitated.

"It is a larger living than I could possibly have expected."

"Not Reddestone, surely."

"Reddestone surely."

"Have you that from the Bishop himself?"

"Under his own hand."

Eva was not so elated at the news as Charles expected she would have been. He knew nothing of the painful associations connected with Reddestone, and which made its close proximity to Oakstone distressing. Much as he had feared to excite her, he seemed almost disappointed at her grave congratulations.

"You do not appear as delighted as I thought you would be," he remarked.

"You bargained that I should be calm; but, indeed, I am very glad."

Glad to have it she undoubtedly was; but her pleasure had alloy.

There was great grief in Hilton when the news

was known. So selfish as to wish it different, they could not be to their unselfish pastor; but they mourned his loss sincerely. They gave him a substantial proof of their estimation. In one week a hundred guineas were collected for a testimonial for him. He was asked whether he would prefer it as a purse or in plate, and he replied that though his move would involve expense, and the money would be convenient, both he and Eva would prefer it in a form which would be always before them, associated in their minds with a place whose memory would be dear to them while they had life to feel. Accordingly it was laid out in a silver tea equipage, the subscribers being desirous to include Eva in the compliment.

Charles was wishful to afford the curate of Reddestone, and the widow of its late rector, the same generous toleration which he had experienced from Edward Phillips. He wrote to the former to say that he should be happy to fulfil whatever engagement Mr. Griffin had made with him; and to the widow Eva wrote, by his desire, to request that she would entirely suit her own convenience, and not think of moving before it was agreeable to her: an

offer of which, however, she did not avail herself. She departed immediately for Ireland, and the children of the former marriage went to their mother's relatives. Thereupon the Stanhope's took possession of Reddestone rectory.

CHAPTER XIV.

REDDESTONE RECTORY.

THE Stanhopes had occupied Reddestone about a year and a half: the parish already bore fruits of Charles's ministry, and the rectory had long borne evidences of Eva's taste. Reddestone rectory, which was situated at the base of the hill of that name, with which the reader is already acquainted, was a new house, had been built within the last ten years, and had been constructed rather in imitation of Oakstone. But, though a good and commodious, and for a rectory, a large house, it was a much smaller scale than Oakstone; instead of three fronts it possessed but one. This one, on the exterior, resembled the approach front of Oakstone, with the exception of the massive porch, which the rectory did not possess; but it had the same number of gables, the same thick mullioned windows, the same recesses and abutments, the same straight carriage drive:

though the latter, in consequence of the road being differently located with regard to the house, approached from the side, instead of the front as at Oakstone. This carriage road, which was but short, cut its way through a pretty pleasure ground laid out in beds of flowers interspersed with ornamental shrubs, and separated from the lawn by a light wire fence.

Much as they had improved by the change, it took Charles and his wife some little time to get reconciled to their new home, and to contemplate the one they had left without regret. There is a natural attachment in the human disposition for the place where we have been very happy. It extends even to a locality—much more a home. We identify the place with the feelings we experienced while there, and as they were pleasurable or the reverse, so are those which the memory of the place awakens. How often have we a rooted aversion to a place where we have endured sorrow or annoyance, though the place itself may have had nothing whatever to do with the cause of it; and how little we wish to behold it again. How often do we hear the bitter exclamation, “I never wish to see the place again!” though perhaps, we know that if we

visited that spot under other circumstances, we should have nothing to complain of; still, we have been unhappy there, and the scene of our unhappiness is an object of our dislike.

In a home we are so familiarized with every spot, and nook, and corner: we have so fitted into them. Here we wept and prayed, or there we talked and laughed; here we hoarded our treasures, or there we brooded over our desolation. The articles of our daily use, which become so indispensable, that at last they seem to form a part of ourselves, are all imperceptibly adding their mite to the process of identification; and separation from a home is the keenest parting of life, except that of heart and heart. Hilton parsonage was the first place that Charles and Eva could properly, so to speak, look upon as a home, and both had become warmly attached to it; there had been spent the spring-time of their married life, their children had been born there. Eva did not leave it without tears—Charles scarcely.

For some time they felt strange and uncomfortable in Reddestone. It was larger and less cosy: they did not fit it, as they did the parsonage. It took some time to increase their furniture, to make it adequate for such a much

larger house, and many things which had seemed very suitable in the parsonage looked out of character at the rectory. Charles, who had often coveted a study, found he did not like half so well going into one, and being shut up by himself, as he had liked his snug corner and untidy table at Hilton, with Eva on the other side of the fire.

To Eva, everything she looked at recalled painful emotions. In going over the house to apportion the rooms to their various uses, she had chosen the one for herself and her husband which best answered their requirements; and its being contiguous to the nursery, constituted another advantage. But on walking to the window, she discovered that the view it commanded lay across the vale between them and Oakstone, the tall chimneys of which could be seen through the trees, though the building itself was lost in the foliage. She turned sadly away, and chose another room which looked out on the opposite side.

Time wrought its changes. By degrees the new occupants became familiarized with the place; occupations accumulated and interests sprang up, new ties were riveted and old ones slackened, and association's keen edge became blunted by recur-

rence. Charles went mechanically to his study and felt at home there, and Eva's light foot-steps could find their way to her babies' cribs in the dark. (There were three of them now.) The air of Reddestone agreed with her better than that of Hilton; it was more bracing, and at times, even a delicate colour would tinge her pale cheek.

With the Oakstone family and Eva, only the communication essential between a clergyman's wife and her husband's parishioners existed. She had been invited to stay at Oakstone while the operation of settling themselves at the rectory went on, she was even asked to bring the children with her; but she declined. All the Cliftons walked across the fields to see her, and placed a boat at her disposal whenever she wished to cross to them; but Eva returned the visit in her carriage, in grand costume. She wore a magnificent Indian silk shawl which had been sent her as a present by an uncle of her husband's, and between the elegance of her dress and appearance, and the dignity of her bearing, she might well have passed for a duchess. It was the first time she had ever been in the house since she had left it as we have seen; but no trace of remembrance was discernible in the light ease

of her manner. The drawing-room had been entirely re-furnished since she had seen it last; but her eye appeared to miss none of its familiar acquaintances: indeed, it seemed not to rest on anything in the room, and Agnes's remark to Myra that night, was, that she did not think Eva was even aware of there being a change.

The two girls walked to the rectory once or twice again. They went early that they might find Eva at home, but they thought they appeared to interrupt her more than was convenient. She always came to them from another part of the house, where she appeared to have been occupied, sat conversing with them with the formal politeness of receiving a mere morning call; and when they took leave, before they left the house, they would see her crossing the bottom of the hall on her way back to where she had been disturbed from. The girls felt awkward, and ceased to do more than pay occasional formal visits. Agnes and Eva met every Sunday at the school, to which Myra had discontinued coming. They always exchanged conventional courtesies, then each took her seat at her class and there was no further intercourse. At first, Agnes shed many a tear; but we get used to all things. Eva

now gave frequent dinner-parties. The Cliftons dined with her once; but as she invariably declined their invitations, though her husband sometimes accepted them, they refused to go a second time, and Eva did not ask them a third.

But we have digressed from the subject we started on. A year and a half of the time of our retrospection had passed, when, one glorious summer morning, two gentlemen strolled across the sunlit fields which lay along the Kennet's side, to where a boat lay moored beneath its bank. Without making any remark, the elder stepped into the boat and took his seat in the stern, as one who expected none of the labour of the ferrying over to devolve on him. As soon as he was seated, the younger man, who still stood upon the bank, drew the boat-pin, and leaping with the chain in his hand into the boat, possessed himself of the oars and prepared to row across. His seemed a hand accustomed to handle oars, so mechanically it took to the work. He gave one or two skilful, though not very vigorous, strokes, then, lying on his oars, suffered the boat to glide down the stream. As he did so his eyes wandered, if that fixed gaze

could be said to wander, to the distant hills which bounded the horizon. There was something very remarkable in the expression of that cold eye, which thus gazed at the far-off view without seeming to take cognizance of any feature in it, yet ignoring all that intervened. It was an eye that with a bright keen look, such as once habitually flashed from it, would have appeared black; but its calm and steady light now permitted the beholder to perceive that its natural colour inclined to grey. In it was a look of resignation; not meek, sad, humble resignation, but resignation tempered by discipline: a cold, grave, enduring resignation to a fate which had been roughly cast, and for which there was no remedy. There were traces of lines other than those of age upon his open brow. He was in the prime of life, scarcely past thirty; but his form, though strongly built and very muscular, was thinly clothed with flesh, and had already lost much of the roundness of youth. Handsome to an eminent degree he must always be; but his beauty now inspired more interest than admiration.

Turning in the boat towards the opposite bank to that he had embarked from, the oarsman we

have been describing, leaped ashore and drove the pin home. Joined by his companion they both took their way towards the rectory.

Within the oriel window of the rectory drawing-room Charles Stanhope was seated, with an open book blazing with gorgeous pictures on the tripod before him, and on his knee his little Eva, who, full of childish eagerness and importance, was showing him how well she could read ; while the young mother, scarcely less eager or less proud, stood behind the chair, a cape she was embroidering for her baby's frock in her hand, the needle and long thread hanging carelessly down, abandoned and forgotten as she leaned anxiously forward to hear how her pupil acquitted herself.

They looked a picture. What some artists would have given for the sitting ! The opened window with its trellised roses, the fond look of unbent thought in the father's face, the beauty of the mother and child, the refined domesticity of the scene.

Little Eva was a most patrician-looking child. Had any one been told on first seeing her, "that is a young princess," their remark would be, "she looks it." Every attribute of high breeding distinguished

her. Unlike her mother in feature—for she was a perfect Saxon, with her blue eyes, the transparent pink and white of her complexion, and the fair golden hair which fell in thick ringlets on her low and sloping shoulders—she had the same pliant grace in her figure, the same long slender throat, the same winning charm in her smile. The smile of Eva's latter days was the smile by nature of her child ; whose face, though sweet and generally animated, never wore that dazzling brightness which had once been peculiarly her mother's.

Their attention was aroused from their occupation by the opening of the door ; and Ernest Clifton stood within Eva Stanhope's home. He was accompanied by his father. Eva shook hands with both in silence. She had had no notice, no time to rally, and for a moment she durst not trust herself to speak. Ernest held out his hand to the child, and Eva led her towards him in silence.

“Who is he, ma ?”

Her mother hesitated and coloured. At last, she said, in a kind gentle tone, “Call him Uncle Ernest, if he will allow you.”

He raised the beauteous little scholar on his

knee and kissed her peachlike cheek. What was he thinking of, that childless man? Eva's heart ached for him. To her eye, which had once so studied every variation in that handsome face, there was no concealment. She read aright the result of sorrow; though, perhaps, all that sorrow embraced was not revealed to her. She did not like to look fixedly at him, and her glances were quick and furtive; but they sufficed to reveal the truth. Some may triumph over the misery of one who has deserted them; Eva could not: she had loved too unselfishly; and she could not look upon that altered object of her once passionate love without pain.

There he sat within that rectory which his friends had coveted for him, and which he himself would formerly have liked. Eva was now its mistress, and Eva was mother to the child upon his knee: his child was in its grave, his wife in a madhouse, his home distant and desolate. Many thought Eva had the better lot as she was; yet, why is that choking pain in her throat? why does she find it so difficult to repress emotion? Repress it she did. No one to see her could have deemed what turmoil was going on within: how much too quick the heart gave out its tide. She talked

gravely but pleasantly on all the chief topics of the locality, and tried to prevent any awkwardness arising. It seemed strange to be so conversing with Ernest.

As the gentlemen rose to leave, the nurse with the little boy in her arms entered, to ask if Miss Stanhope should come out for a walk. A most beautiful boy he was! finer, larger, and more robust than his sister. His face, becomingly set off by the full lace border beneath his leghorn hat, looked most bright and joyous, as he crowed with delight on getting inside the door and seeing his father and mother.

“This is my eldest son,” said Eva, who could not resist the temptation that beautiful boy offered to a mother’s pride, of showing him: and she took him from the nurse’s arms and brought him by the hand to Ernest. Looking up wonderingly in the stranger’s face, the child slowly put his little fat hand into the one held towards him.

“You don’t think him a beauty at all, I suppose, Mrs. Stanhope!” said Charles Oakley, who had just come in, and stood laughing behind her.

“I never give an opinion about my children; I leave people to form their own.”

"A mother's pride in its most exaggerated form. You think there can be no question about it: 'I need not praise my children's beauty like that Mrs. So-and-so is always doing. People can see for themselves how handsome mine are.' Well! he is a handsome boy, Mrs. Stanhope, and you must be forgiven for knowing it. But, for fear you might be making too much an idol of him, which you know would be very wrong, I have brought him the means of making himself a bit of a nuisance sometimes."

He drew a child's whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast. The boy's dancing eyes were devouring it. He toddled up to Mr. Oakley, with whom he was familiar, with his hand stretched out.

"Here! my boy: make yourself as disagreeable as you possibly can, for fear mamma should get too fond of you."

"Tut! you don't blow it right. See here! He blew another long blast. The boy shrieked with delight."

"I am very happy to say he will not be able to accomplish that," said Eva, as her child vainly pursed up his little mouth and tried to make the whistle sound.

"Have you extracted any praise of him from Clifton, Mrs. Stanhope? Is he not a fine boy, Ernest?"

"Yes; a fine handsome boy; but I like the little girl best."

"She is her papa's darling, also," said Eva, "so, for the sake of fair play I am obliged to make a bit of a pet of this boisterous rogue."

Ernest looked first at the mother, then at her little daughter: he said half-musingly, "There is something so sweet and gentle in her face."

There was something so sad in his own, while he spoke, that Eva was touched. She hastened to send away the children.

Mr. Clifton prepared to go.

"Do you come with us, Oakley?" Ernest asked; as if, it struck Eva, he fully expected he would.

"Not just yet. I have not paid my visit to Mrs. Stanhope. Stroll down to the water's edge in an hour and ferry me across."

Eva and Ernest seemed to part with more indifference than is usual with friends who meet but rarely. They touched each other's hand with a forced smile, and both turned coldly and abruptly away. Yet, at that moment, in the

most carefully secured recess of Ernest's private bureau, was concealed a bundle of discoloured envelopes directed in Eva's hand-writing (the letters by her desire had been burnt), and in the most secret drawer of Eva's dressing-case, in an old sovereign purse he had once thrown away, was the emerald ring her cousin had given her, six years ago. One look at either, neither could trust themselves to bestow.

CHAPTER XV.

UNEXPECTED DISCLOSURES.

"I WISH matters stood as they once did between you and Oakstone," said Mr. Oakley to Eva, as they were sitting alone together, Charles having been called out of the room on business, "and then I should ask you to cross over with me and pay a visit."

Eva coloured slightly. "I do not owe them a visit," she said, and after a pause continued, "You are intimate with them, I believe; at least, I sometimes hear of your being there."

"I am often there. Perhaps some of these days I shall come and tell you what takes me there so frequently: you made a wrong guess once."

Eva looked up with quick surprise. "If I guessed again should I be wrong?" she asked, with an eagerness she was seldom surprised into regarding anything connected with the Cliftons.

"You are forestalling my promise, Mrs. Stanhope. I did not say I would tell you to-day. You must have patience."

"Is it really so?" she exclaimed, involuntarily.

"That is what I call *impatience*. And now to punish you, I shall run away. One word I will say before I go;" he took her hand in his, and with a look and tone of earnest feeling continued, "You do not know what a regret this estrangement between you and them is to me. You are the person in the world I most admire, and, as you would not accord me a dearer title, I am proud that you number me among your friends: I trust that no occurrence may ever induce you to retract that grace. You do not know how often and how fervently I have wished that that sad meeting at Oakstone had never taken place."

"That is past now: long past and forgotten."

"Forgotten!" thought Charles, as his eye fell on her face. "I wish it could be," he said aloud, and pressing her hand with warm kindness, he left her.

For long after his departure Eva did not move. She sat riveted to the chair, seemingly so deep in thought as scarcely to be conscious of anything external. So Agnes was to be happy, at last! It could not be said either to please or displease her; but it surprised her. She had become too indifferent to Agnes to feel any interest in her

welfare; but she was familiar with Mr. Oakley, and had contracted a friendship for him, and she was pondering over what aspect the new course of events would be likely to make their intercourse assume. "What changes take place in time!" was her reflection, as her thoughts threaded their way back to the day when Charles Oakley had proposed for herself, and had deemed so preposterous her imagining that he felt a preference for Agnes. And now Agnes was to be his wife. Happy at last! A shade of bitterness passed over her face at the recollection of the many little assistances she had given towards germinating the issue which was now approaching consummation, and contrasting them with the adverse influence on her own destiny with which Agnes had repaid her warm-hearted aid.

Perhaps it was a more than usually unfavorable day for Agnes; a day on which emotions had been awakened: emotions over which even time had been able to spread so slight a cuticle that a touch abraded it. At length she rose, and went up-stairs for some work she was going to cut out for the school. The materials had been laid aside in a spare bedroom, which happened to be the one that she had rejected for its view. From the windows

she saw Ernest and his two sisters walking down to the river side. Then she lost sight of him, for the trees which overhung the bank upon the side nearest to her, concealed the river itself from her view, but she could see the two girls sitting on the opposite bank. Presently they were joined by Ernest and Charles Oakley, and in pairs they walked up the fields towards the terrace front of Oakstone. Eva stood watching them; vague thoughts floating through the chambers of her brain, in which visions she had once formed of herself taking part in such domestic strolls were recalled, in undefined yet painful shapes. Suddenly recollecting herself, she felt angry that she should have permitted such a train of thought to arise. Driving it away, with a reproachful pang at having indulged it, she went to look for her husband, and caressed him as if she felt he had been wronged by her thoughts.

He was in his study preparing to go to work. Eva remained standing by his side as he sat before his desk.

“I did not know that Ernest Clifton was at Oakstone,” she remarked; “did you, Charles?”

“Yes: I heard it yesterday in one of the cottages where I was visiting, and as I passed

Oakstone on my way home, I called. I intended telling you, but you were not in the house when I came in, and I forgot it in the evening."

" You never have time to speak to me in the evenings now," she said, half reproachfully. " I am a mere cipher. Every look and thought is given to your desk."

" Who made me an author ?" returned her husband, drawing her on his knee.

" You might as well be writing as reading, and you know you never closed your book until I set you at making some for others to read. Recollect how you were used to pore over them when I was ill in Dublin."

" That was holiday time, you know."

" A queer holiday ! You never raised your eyes off the book, except when you came to put something into my mouth."

" Yes I did : I used to take a look at you sometimes."

" I never saw you."

" I daresay not : nevertheless, I looked often enough to fall in love."

" I often wondered why you fancied me at that time ; I was so ill and so dull."

" Your beauty and helplessness first interested

me: your patience and gentleness then. Your smile, I think, was the first thing that found its way to my heart; it was so sweet and sad, it used to make me long to comfort you. It seemed natural that you should feel depressed, so ill and weak as you were, and among strangers. But it was not until I discovered the superiority of your mind that I began to think of you as a wife."

"My father was often used to tell me, when I knew anything that he did not, that I should find men hated learned ladies."

"It was your mind, not your learning, that I admired. You are not very learned: you have not read sufficiently in either depth or quantity to be learned; but you are very clever. Now, I think I have praised you enough; go and leave me to my work. I own I might be a pleasanter inmate of a house if I had less to do, but as I have it to do, it must be done. Go, love."

"Let me stay a little: I do not often 'idle' you. You have not told me about your visit. Were the Cliftons at home?"

"Only the gentlemen; at least, they were all I saw."

"Did you say your visit was to Ernest?"

“ Yes : I acquitted myself with all the propriety of modern conventionality ; you would have praised me if you had been there to see. I should have offered him my pulpit on Sunday, as this is his own neighbourhood ; but when a man’s practices are so High Church as his, I suspect his doctrine must agree with them in too great a measure for me to countenance, so I said nothing about it.”

“ Are his practices anything extreme ?”

“ Why, yes : his Bishop has been calling him to order. I understand he even objects to register as legitimate the births which take place under the new marriage act : he ignores any marriage, not ecclesiastical.”

“ What can he be thinking of ?”

“ His idea is that marriage is a divine ordinance, which cannot be solemnized without the offices of the Church. However, that is a mistaken notion, where the temporal law legalizes it ; though I think, with him, that it ought to be a religious ceremony.”

“ So do I. I would not be married otherwise, or in any place but a church, for the whole world. But is it for that that the Bishop has been reproving Ernest ?”

"No; for the Romish formula with which he conducts the services of his church. They were speaking of it at the last clerical meeting; saying that Clifton's tendencies had always been that way, and since he had gone to that neighbourhood, he had fallen into the hands of people of extreme Tractarian views. They seemed to think his domestic sorrows had had a determining influence towards it. They were talking of his practices; I did not hear much of his doctrinal opinions: I should fancy them pretty extreme. Unless I make a mistake, it has taken some fasting to reduce him to what he is."

Eva sighed. "What wild work they have made with him," she thought.

She felt sad and weary with the world. Unwilling to be thrown upon her own thoughts, she pleaded to be allowed to stay with her husband, drawing down his head that her lips might try other influence than words. With Charles, even words never pleaded in vain, unless he deemed what she asked to be wrong. He good temperedly resigned his pen and took a book instead; now and again sparing a moment from it to press his lips on the smooth forehead that rested on his shoulder, or whisper a word of endearment

into an ear that needed comfort more than he dreamed of.

During this visit of Ernest's to Oakstone, an event came to light which materially affected his fortunes : an unexpected arrival—at least, unexpected in all quarters except the one likely to be best informed on the subject—took place at the residence of Mr. Neville, Clara's uncle.

At first there was some scandal about it in the neighbourhood, but when the baby came to be baptised, it was done as the child of John and Mary Neville; Mary Neville being a buxom housekeeper who had taken charge of Mr. Neville's house, and had no objection to extend her duties to taking charge of the master also : a care he very much needed. Living in perfect retirement, they had been married a year without any one having ever guessed it; until the arrival of a fine fat boy made it necessary to declare it. This boy lost to Ernest the largest of his expectancies from his wife : a heavy blow to those who had been so eager for the ill-starred marriage.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SICK GIPSY.

“WHAT do you want, my child?” asked Eva, who was going out, trowel in hand, to bed out some seedling verbenas she had reared in a hot-bed: she addressed herself to a ragged little boy about eight or nine years old, whom she found flattening his nose against one of the panes of the glass hall-door, as he peered with intelligent curiosity through it. “What do you want, my dear?” she repeated, receiving no answer to her first question.

The child, who had hung his head on being perceived, now looked up shyly. There was something in his dark bright eyes that fascinated Eva’s gaze. She looked long at them, almost spell-bound. In a still kinder tone she demanded—

“Where do you come from, my little boy?”

“From the hill beyant.”

“What do you want?”

“Granny wants the lady.”

“What lady?”

“The lady as lives here: the parson’s lady.”

“Why did not Granny come herself to the lady?”

“Granny’s sick.”

“Where?”

“On the hill beyant.”

“Is she in bed?”

“Yes.”

“Has she been long ill?”

“Doan’t know.”

“What does she complain of? Has she any pain?”

The little boy looked up again, and again as she looked into his eyes that strange fascination which she could not account for, more felt than recognized, crept over Eva.

“I doan’t know: she’s sick,” he answered.

“Does Granny live far away? Could I walk there?” asked Eva.

“I’ll show ye the way,” said the child quickly; and as his face brightened with intelligence, Eva felt more forcibly its attraction.

Returning into the house, she brought forth a little basket in one hand, in the other a slice

of bread and butter, which she gave to the child, desiring him to show her the way and she would accompany him to his grandmother.

After passing through the village, Eva's little guide led straight up the hill, by a path which lay through the scrubby, rocky portion not yet undermined by the quarrymen, though evidently a future field for the blaster's energies. Getting over a stile, which the child had more nimbly crossed before her, Eva found herself on the triangle of the lane where, years before, Ernest, with gentle coercion, had led her pony past the gipsy encampment. She had never been there since. One look hastily withdrawn, one pain-wrung sigh, and she passed across it, and followed the child over a stile at the opposite angle. There, beneath the shelter of the high hedge, was one of those round arched tents such as she had formerly seen.

"Here's Granny," said the child, stopping before the aperture. Eva was obliged to stoop to enter. It was so dark at first, she could distinguish nothing accurately; but as her sight became accustomed to the obscurity, she could perceive a figure coiled up on a wretched pallet, which she concluded to be the invalid. Bending

down over the bed, she said in a kind, gentle voice,

“I am afraid you are very poorly.”

The figure uncurled itself at the sound of the voice and turned its face towards her. Eva’s vision now having become habituated to the imperfect light, could discern its ghastly pallor, which gave to the dark swarthy skin the appearance of parchment. There was still fire in the eye. In a second its keen glance detected the basket in Eva’s hand, and it flashed with an eager light that seemed at variance with the worn attenuated appearance of the other features. Eva saw it.

“I have brought a little broth,” she said. “I did not well know what to bring: your little boy could not tell me what was the matter with you.”

“And you’re not one of them that likes an excuse to come empty-handed,” interrupted the old hag. “Give me the broth.”

“You cannot take it as it is; it is in jelly. Is there any way of heating it here?”

Eva looked about in despair, no appearance of a fire existed.

“Here, Har’ld,” called the old woman. The

child who had conducted Eva appeared at the entrance. "Light a fire, quick! you bad boy, or I'll lick you; and warm your granny's broth for her."

"He is very young," remarked Eva; "perhaps I could help him."

"Let 'im be! he 'll do it: he's used to it."

So he appeared to be. In a few moments he collected a heap of dry sticks, fired them with a light he struck from an old chisel and flint stone, and appearing at the aperture again, said pithily, "Fire 's lit."

"Bring that little skillet I see there," said Eva. She emptied the bowl of jellied broth into it, and gave it to the child, with an injunction to be careful it did not upset; an injunction not needed, for he was better skilled than she was in that style of cooking.

He stuck three sticks triangle-wise round the fire, and hanging the skillet from the apex, squatted in front, occasionally stirring it with a stick.

While it was warming, Eva began to make inquiries of the woman respecting her illness: she found she had long been a victim to an internal disorder which had latterly assumed a more malignant shape.

"Perhaps a doctor could do something for you?" suggested Eva.

"No, no: I'll none of 'em. The end must come to us all: mine's near; that's why I sent for you."

"I wish my husband had come with me."

"No; I dunna want him: I'd rayther have yourself. You don't content yourself with preaching."

"Neither does my husband; but, as you think the end is coming, would you not like to hear something of that other world to which you are going."

"Well, tell me yourself; I like to hear you talk."

"I will try; but my husband would do it better. Here is the broth; you had better eat some, it will strengthen you, and then I will read a little to you." She poured some of the broth into the bowl, in which she had broken a slice of bread she had brought, and gave it to the sick woman, who eat it greedily.

"Give the child a taste," she said, holding the nearly emptied bowl to Eva.

"I do not think he wants it; he has had as much as he could eat. This had better be put

with the rest, for yourself at another time. Now, if you will compose yourself, I will read."

She read a chapter descriptive of our Saviour's passion, then kneeling down by the bedside, she made the child kneel also, while she prayed, earnestly, and in as simple language as she could, that the poor tenant of that sick bed might reap the saving blessings of that holy sacrifice.

" You seem badly off for assistance," said Eva, as she rose from her knees. " I do not like to leave you so. Have you no friendly woman to come in and see after you ? "

" No ; I dunna want 'em. The child's a good child and looks after his granny."

" Still I should think you must want many things he could not do."

" No, I doan't ; but, thank you, for you mean kindly."

" I will come and see you to-morrow, and will bring something with me. If you would like to see my husband, he will come also. You need not be afraid of him, he is very gentle and very good ; if you saw him once I think you would like to see him again."

" I saw him once."

" Did you ? Where ? "

"In the village. I went down it on purpose to see him, though I hate goin' where there are stone walls ; and I saw your three fine children too : real beauties they are."

The mother's face brightened. The old woman's keen eye was fixed on her ; raising herself a little up in the bed, she put her skinny claw upon the white hand which rested on the Testament Eva had been reading from, and said, looking searchingly in her face as she spoke—

"Lady, are you happy ? "

"Yes ; very happy. Why do you ask ? "

"Because I am used to read the face, and I see the tokens of weighty sorrow upon yours."

"We must all know sorrow sometimes."

"Ay ! ay ! Love first, then trust, then sorrow ; no new tale ! And do you love your husband, lady ? "

"Of course, I do," replied Eva, a little reproof of the liberty in her tone.

"As well as t' other ? "

"What other ? "

"The one that made that rosy face so white."

Eva turned suddenly round and looked at her.

"Ah ! lady, there's no deceivin' us ! We read

the stars above your head ; we read the lines upon your palm."

"Are you a gipsy ?"

"Ay ; a gipsy as you call it."

"Why, then, are you alone here? I thought you always went in companies."

"The tribe passed on to-day. They would have taken me, but I wouldn't go. My time is short, and I'd business to do. I'll lay my bones in Reddestone churchyard. Doan't go yet. I've more to say," (seeing Eva rise).

"What would you say to me?"

"Show me your hand."

"No, no ; my fortune is made," said Eva, withholding her hand with a half sad smile.

"Which spoke the truth, the gipsy's tongue or the lover's eyes, the last time you and I met on yonder lane? You believed' the eyes then : you believe the tongue now, I trow."

"Were you the gipsy who told my fortune?"

"Ay : your money was not paid for a lie, was it?"

"No," replied Eva, sorrowfully. "How did you know."

"Ha! ha! how does the gipsy read the stars?

I told other fortunes than yours that day. Is *he* happy?"

"Alas! no."

"Why not? He married for goold?"

"Gold will not bring happiness."

"Ha! ha! He does not scoff at the gipsy's lore now, and laugh to scorn the prophecy that's fulfilled. His cricket did not chirp, did it?"

"If you mean his child, it was born dead."

"Ha! ha!" Her laugh was like that of a hyena.

"Oh! do not rejoice in the misfortunes of any-one."

"Did he bring misfortune on no one? How many salt tears ran down those cheeks of your own, before the colour that was in them last time I saw them was washed away, and they left as they are? Eh?"

"If I forgive, why should any one remember? He never injured you."

"Never injured me!" said the gipsy, slowly.

"A hasty word he may have spoken; I dare say you deserved it."

"You little know ——" she broke off without finishing. "I told you you'd mount high: you are on the road. There's risin' written on your forehead. God fills the open hand."

"Will *he* be happy yet?" asked Eva, in spite of herself, leaning with some kind of unacknowledged credence to the gipsy's gift of prophecy.

"Never," was the reply, "no never. He didn't deserve it."

"Do not say that. All was not his fault. He could not help it."

"Ay, ay; a man can always help his own deeds. Happy! no, never; he'll never be happy!" The thought seemed to give her pleasure; the sinister smile deepened on her haggard features as she lay back on the bed. Just then a paroxysm of pain came on: she became convulsed.

Eva would not leave her while it lasted. When it passed, finding she rejected all overtures of having assistance, Eva prepared to leave.

"What have you for the night?" she asked.

"What's left of the broth: it's mighty good."

"But the child."

"Must farridge for himself."

"Could you spare him to come down to the rectory with me?"

"Spare him! Ay, well. I don't want him."

"You are not afraid of being left alone."

"Afeard! ha, ha! When will you come again?"

"To-morrow."

"Ay, come to-morrow: I will be here to-morrow. I've more to say to you: I want to talk to you about the child. But I'll not say it till to-morrow."

"Has the boy no parents?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow; and hark ye, bring a bit of wax when you come."

"Sealing wax?"

"Ay; what you fasten your letters with. I'll tell you to-morrow. Go now. God bless you! You're good any way, Busnee or no Busnee."

Calling the boy to accompany her, Eva departed. On the way she asked many questions of her little guide. He could tell her nothing, except incidents of their gipsy life. He did not know his age, nor whether he had a father or mother; he never knew of any one but Granny. He wished Granny had gone with the people when they moved. They offered to sling her on a mule, but Granny said she wanted to die where she was, near the church-yard. They were to encamp that night in yonder hills. And the child turned back and looked wistfully at the distant hills, as if he was picturing to himself the encampment, and regretfully contrasting its wild free merriment with his sober alternative. As he turned his eyes back to Eva,

the thrill of that wondrous charm which lay in them, and which she could not define, penetrated to her heart. He was a very handsome child ; though dirt and want of care had done its best, it could not conceal the natural beauty of his features, nor the expression which had so won upon Eva.

“Would you not like to go to school where you would see other little boys like yourself, and have pretty books with pictures in them, and learn to read them ?”

“I reads letters,” said the child.

“Where did you learn them ?”

“On the dead-stones in the graveyard.”

“A sad school !” thought Eva. “Would you not like to come to my school ? You would see a great many children there every day, and you should have a nice book, and learn to grow up a good man, when Granny gets well, and can spare you.”

“Granny says she ’ll die.”

“No one knows : God can make Granny well if he pleases. We must pray to him and ask him to cure her ; and if he does not please it, we must be content for poor Granny to die, and trust to God to take her up into heaven.”

"Are any of our people there?" asked the child.

Eva was poised. Considering all she had ever heard of gipsies it seemed a hard question to answer.

"I hope so; good gipsies. Do you see those children inside the gate? Those are my children; you may go on and speak to them while I get something for your Granny. Here, my loves, speak kindly to this little boy: his grandmother is very ill."

A little basket was soon packed. Eva explained to the child what portion he was to eat himself, what give to his grandmother. She watched him till he passed through the gate and was out of sight, and was turning into the house again, when a cry of delight from the children proclaimed that their father was coming. She halted in the doorway to see Charles dismount and lift his little Eva, who had raced to meet him, into the saddle.

"You too!" he exclaimed, as the boy, distanced by his more lithe sister, toddled up with outstretched arms. "There! It is well baby does not want to ride, or poor Sultan's back would be broken. Do you want to buy any-

thing from a pedlar to-day, ma'am?" he called out, as he came leading Sultan up to the door, trying with his other hand to keep the two crowning little beauties steady on the saddle. "They are very bad goods, ma'am: I am an honest pedlar, and I won't pass them off as worth much. I'll sell them cheap."

"No, 'pa, sell us dear: 'ma, say we are too dear," called out little Eva, eager for the fun of a bargain.

Eva humoured them, and for a while, ensued a good deal of merry bantering between mother and father, as to the worthlessness of goods both esteemed so precious. Then, lifting her boy to the ground, Eva said—

"Dinner will be ready, and papa must be hungry. Go to nurse, darlings; she has gone down the garden with baby. Eva, take dear brother's hand."

That night when Eva went into the nursery to kiss her sleeping babies, and she saw their shiny heads so tenderly pillow'd, her thoughts reverted to the gipsy child alone with his dying grandmother, and when she said her prayers that night that child was remembered in them.

CHAPTER XVII.

“THE MESSENGER.”

CHARLES went on a visit to Hilton Castle the next day. He was to meet the Bishop there. As soon as Eva had heard her little girl say her lesson, and had given the necessary directions for the household for the day, she started with her basket to the gispy's tent.

“ You are early,” said the old woman, turning round at the sound of her voice. “ It is well.”

Eva was struck with the change which had taken place in her, even since she had seen her the day before. Her features were more drawn, her eyes more sunken, her complexion more livid. Her hours were evidently numbered. After a few kind inquiries for her health, and how she had got through the night, Eva knelt beside the bed and prayed with her. The woman listened attentively, and appeared to join in parts.

“ You cannot think how comforting my husband

can be beside a sick bed," said Eva; "he can speak and pray so much better than I can. I think I will bring him to-morrow."

"I'll not be here to-morrow. Let him say his prayers over me in the churchyard below."

"Do you feel so near dying?" asked Eva, in concern.

"Ay, death's could hand is on me. Did you bring the wax."

"Yes; it is here. Where is the child to-day?"

"Gone to pick sticks; I bid him go when he told me he saw you comin' up the hill, to have him out of the way. Just put your hand under my head and try do you feel anything."

Eva repressed a shrinking reluctance she felt to touch the filthy looking bed, and drew from underneath the bag of straw which served as a pillow, a little packet made up in coarse brown paper, about the size of a thick letter.

"Is this what you wish sealed?"

"Ay; seal it on the bed where I can see."

Eva struck a match which she had brought and sealed the packet. The sick woman extended her hand and clutched it greedily. "Can it be her will?" thought Eva. "Can she have anything to leave?"

“I want to talk to you, and I must not put it off,” said the woman, whose looks verified her words that with her what was procrastinated must be left undone. “I want to talk to you about that boy. He calls me Granny. I’m nothing to him. No, no ; I didn’t steal him,” she continued, reading Eva’s startled look. “ ’Twas to my own sorrow I came by him. I’ll try to tell you short, for my time’s not long. I had a boy myself once, as beautiful a boy as ever you seen, with eyes like diamints, and a colour as bright as your own when I first seen you. There was somethin’ in your lightsome look that day reminded me of him, and my heart warmed to you as it never did to a Busnee before. Ye were like in more than that—fond and foolish the two of ye. He grew up to be a splendid man, the pride of the tribe, and I was a proud woman to be his mother. And he was as gentle as a lamb to me, and did my biddin’ as humble as a child, when he stood six feet two in his bare feet.” The old woman heaved a sigh that seemed wrung from the depths of her heart. “Well, in a town he went into to buy clothes, curses on that town ——”

“Hush, hush,” said Eva, low and warningly.

"Wait till you hear. In that town he seen a girl—that boy's mother, From that hour he never rested; every day an excuse to go to the town, he that hated stone walls. At last, he came and sat down at my feet and told me how he had set his heart on the Busnee girl. I tried to rayson with him. I showed him as how she would na' like our ways, they bein' different to what she was used to. I showed him fine beautiful girls of the tribe who were dyin' for one glance of his dark eye ; all would na' do. He said life was na' worth havin' without Ellie—that was her name: he'd as lieve be dead. 'Twas the first time he ever refused to do my biddin'. He marrit the Busnee. He brought her to the tribe. She did na' like the tents ; them's used to live in houses, dusna'. She persuaded him to go back to the town. I thought no good would come of it when I seen him turnin' his back on the life his father led : but a woman can lead a man anywhere." Often he came to see us, and brought his old mother fine clothes from the town; but he'd never stop. Ellie 'd be lonesome, he'd say. He never thought what the mother that reared him was. After all, 'tis natur. But I must shorten. Strange looks began to be cast about the 'campment, and side speeches made, and when my

boy was seen comin' I could see that winks were changed. What it meant I could na' tell, fool as I was! But one day he came to a shady spot where we had pitched our tents, some four or five miles from the town ; the weather was hot and the highways dusty. A good for nothin' dare-devil, called Dionysius, who had lately come into the tribe, havin' been turned out of the one he belonged to, rose a fight with my boy : I may say about nothin' at all ; he hated Har'l'd because he was jealous of him, of his beauty and his strength. Some hot words passed, for the blackguard was in the wrong, and at last Har'l'd told him he lied. Then he called my Har'l'd a name—I won't repeat it to you, lady, your ears are not used to such—but he called him the name, and asked him did he lie then. I saw the blood mount up into Har'l'd's forehead, till I thought it would have burst the veins. With one blow he stretched the villain at his feet as flat as if he was in his coffin, and turnin' round, walked away through the trees. We moved the next day ; I did not see my son for two months after. One night, as I lay awake thinkin' of him, the shade of the door was pulled back, and he came in. ‘Mother,’ said he, in a strange hoarse voice, ‘are ye awake?’ ‘Ay, my son,’

says I, ‘what’s amiss to bring you to me at this hour of the night?’ ‘Mother, it’s true!’ says he, with a look as if he was tellin’ he kilt a man. ‘What’s true, my son?’ ‘What Nysius’—that’s the name the scoundrel went by in the camp—‘called me; the child ain’t mine.’ I seen his face in the moonlight—’twas as light as day—and his face was like a corpse’s. I sat up in the bed. ‘What do you mean? You hav’nt got a child,’ says I. ‘No; I haven’t, but Ellie has.’ His look went to my heart. I said nothin’; I thought he had enough to bear. Though he went again me, I pitied him. After a while, he said, ‘Mother, I’ll never see her more. Go to her; don’t let her want, she nor the child. I didn’t ask whose it was. I’d have kilt him at the time; I’m cooler now: my heart is broke.’ He covered his face with his two hands, and the tears poured through ’em like rain. I tried to comfort him, though I didn’t know what to say. He shook his head, ‘You dinna’ know how I lov’d her, mother,’ says he. ‘Go to her; I would na’, even yet, she should want; no, nor her child, doan’t let it want either. Go to ’em, mother. I’ll never again face one who knew me before.’ He stooped down and kissed me and darted out

of the tent like a mad man, I after him; but light as it was, I could na' find him. I never seen his face again.”

“ Poor man,” said Eva, compassionately; “ and what became of the wretched wife?”

“ She was dyin’ when I got there. She owned whose the child was; not that he was more to be blempt than another—though I hate him, for he brought trouble on me: he had her easy I expect; she never even said he hadn’t. She owned he never knew the upshot; he was gone away before she discovered it, and when she did, she marrit my son to hide her shame. She died. Would that she had done that a year before! I had the child christened: I had him called Harl’d—Harl’d Lyle’s his name. I thought in years he might pass for my son’s child: but I did not put him in the church books as a lie; I told truth there. I brought him to another tribe than the old one. I called him my grandson. If the people ever guessed he was na’, they knew me, and darn’t say it: I’d have brained ‘em on the spot.”

“ Who was his father?” asked Eva.

“ What matters? He shall never know he has a son.”

“ Where was the child christened?”

"I won't tell you: you want to pick out who the father was."

"And you never saw your son again?"

"Never; though I've walked the world looking for him. Whether he's alive or dead, I dinna'; but I did what he axed me. I never let the child want, and I got to love him when I'd nothing else to love. What I sent for you for was to ax you to look to him when I am dead. Will you? He is not one of our people; he has na' a drop of Egyptian blood in his veins: he won't pine after the woods and hills. Will you make something of him?"

"I will promise he shall be looked after."

"Will you look after him, yourself? I'll trust you if you promise, though you are a Busnee. I never thought I could like one of 'em till I seen you."

"I will promise to look after him, and that he shall not want. I cannot promise to take him entirely, myself, until I have my husband's permission; but he shall not want."

The sick woman here sunk back and fainted. Eva gave her some wine. After a while, she revived, but seemed very ill.

"I'm almost gone," she muttered.

“Would you like if I had you carried down to the village?”

“No, no; I’ll die here, in the free open air, where I’ve lived.”

Eva thought there was no great deal of air in the close dark tent. Just then the little boy peeped in. She held out her hand, and called him to her. He was getting less shy with her, he looked up with an open smile that made him look very handsome.

“It is time for me to go away. I do not know what to do. I do not like to leave you so ill, and no one with you but this child.”

“ ’Twill soon be over.”

“But then what is to become of this poor child?”

“I’ll bid him go to you. You’ll stay with your granny till she’s dead; won’t you, honey?”

“Aye,” said the child, drawing towards the bed with a look of affection.

“I will come very early to-morrow.”

“You needn’t; he’ll go to you. God reward your goodness, lady. He will reward it; but I wish you could have been happy in your own way.”

“That is passed; God saw fit to make me happy in His way, and I am very happy.”

"Aye : but 'tis the shine of the moon not of the sun that's in your face now. Is there never a pain, you can't call by a name, at your heart, and when you come to examine it, you find 'tis *him* that's there ?"

"I have tried to conquer all that."

"And did you succeed ?"

"In a great degree. I ought to have a thankful heart. Though God permitted one heavy blow, he did not leave me desolate ; I have the best of husbands, and three lovely children. One thing I should like to know, and now you are dying, I think you ought not to care to conceal it from me. Had you ever any foundation or reason for knowing what you foretold, that day long ago on the lane, or was it all mere guess-work ? Do not answer me unless you will tell me truly : I would not tempt you to speak an untruth upon your deathbed, but I should like to know."

"It wouldn't advantage you. Your heart is dark to them already."

"To whom ?"

"To them that did it." Another paroxysm came on. She fell back in mortal agony. Eva hastily put the child on its knees, and prayed fervently. Whilst she did so the woman recovered.

She put the packet she still clutched between Eva's joined hands. “This isn't to be opened till *he*'s dead,” she said, solemnly.

“Who? The child? My husband? Mr. Herbert? Ernest?”

The old woman had shaken her head at each guess, until the last; then she nodded it, and said,

“Aye.”

“What is it?”

“'Twill make no matter to you till *he*'s dead; open it then.”

“Some charm,” said Eva, incredulously.

“Aye, a charm sure enough. Promise, or you shall not have it. When the breath is out of his body you may open it. Will you promise not to break the seal before? Eh?”

“Yes; if I may not have it otherwise. But I cannot think what his dying can have to do with it. I may die before him.”

“You won't; you'll be high up when he's low enough, or God's not just. Remember you've promised on your knees not to break the seal while the breath of life is in his body.”

She fell back convulsed. Eva began to pray. Whilst she prayed a change came over the face that already looked so deathlike. It was a change

for the better; the features became composed and less harsh, the expression more placid, even the deeply lined wrinkles appeared to become less marked; the sinister expression, which had always been a characteristic of the mouth, vanished, and its departure effaced all that was revolting in the countenance. Eva prayed on during this change, murmuring hopes for the dead when she believed prayers for the living were no longer needed. Then rising, she closed the eyes, and drawing the child to her, tried to explain to him that she whom he believed to be his grandmother was now in heaven. When he comprehended, he hid his little dirty face in Eva's lap, and cried with the violence of a child's short-lived passionate grief. He would not leave the body, though Eva tried coaxing and bribes. She experienced a strange nervous awe herself at being in that small den with Death, and she felt unwilling to leave the child alone. But he twisted himself obstinately out of her gentle clasp, and clung sobbing to the bed, so she departed, telling him she would send some one to him.

From the village she despatched an old woman, who was in the habit of performing last offices for the dead, and in the evening a coffin was to be taken up to receive the old gipsy's remains.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GIPSY BOY.

AFTER she had seen her own children in bed that evening, Eva walked to the house where the body had been placed, to look after the desolate gipsy child. She found him sitting on the floor, beside the coffin which held the only friend he had ever known. He had ceased to cry, but there was a look of sorrow, very touching in a child, in his tear-stained face. He had sullenly resisted all overtures of the people of the house to draw him away ; but, when Eva entered, there was a softening in the wistful glance he turned to her, as if he acknowledged her as a friend.

“ My dear child,” she said, soothingly, “ you must be tired ; would you not like to go to bed ? ”

“ No ; Granny ain’t in it,” was the mournful reply.

“ You cannot sleep with poor Granny any more. Come with me : you shall have warm bread and

milk for supper, and a nice little bed for yourself. Granny will look down from the sky, and be glad to see how comfortable you are."

"Granny ain't in the sky ; she's here in the coffin ; and she can't see, her eyes is shut."

"Granny will never see with those eyes again ; but Granny's spirit, which made her eyes able to see, is in heaven above," she pointed solemnly to the sky. "Granny is an angel now : God has taken her to himself. But, before Granny's spirit left her body, she asked me to take care of you whom she was leaving behind."

"Did she ?" he looked up.

"Yes : will you be a good boy, and try to do what Granny wished, and come with me ?"

"They would take Granny away if I went."

"No; they would not. Granny will not be buried until to-morrow."

"Will I see her to-morrow ?"

"Yes; if you like. I will bring you down to see her."

"To see her face ?"

"Yes ; you shall see her face to-morrow, before she is taken to the churchyard, and you shall see her put into the grave. I will go with you."

The child looked hard at her. There was

something in that grave gentle face, that won its way with him. Used as he had been all his life to deceit, he believed her, and half reluctantly, half-willingly, he suffered her to lead him away.

Rough hands were kindly raised to hats by workmen returning to their homes, civil, respectful courtesies were dropped by women standing on their thresholds, and many blessings were silently invoked on her, as that gentle lady, leading the little orphan outcast by the hand, passed down the village to her home: Charity and Destitution symbolized.

The orphan slept that night on a little bed Eva had made for him in the corner of her own room. She thought if he were wakeful in the night, he would be more content with her than with the servants. She had had him washed in a tub of warm water by the kitchen fire. Between the pleasant sensation the rare ablution imparted to his skin, the ample supper, the soft bed, and the fatigue of grief, the poor boy soon forgot his sorrows in the deep sound sleep of healthy childhood.

True to her promise, Eva took him the next day to take leave of his grandmother's remains. She bade him kiss the cold face, in the repose of

death no longer repugnant; then the lid of the coffin was closed. Mr. Stanhope was not expected to come home before the middle of the day; Eva thought most likely he would have the funeral take place in the evening, and had the grave prepared. But he did not return as early as she expected, and he postponed the interment until the following morning. He thought that Eva looked jaded. He reproached her for having overdone herself; but she smiled away his anxiety and called down the children to welcome him. He listened to a wonderful story from the young Eva, of four little white mice arriving in the night, and being found with her two old mice in the morning, and no one could tell where they came from; tossed his boy high in the air; patted the baby's soft cheek; then went to his books, and Eva led away the children.

The next morning the old gipsy was buried. A few of the villagers carried the coffin into the churchyard; the orphan, in a decent black-frock, stood with Eva by the grave, and cried bitterly when he saw it covered in. Eva stayed much with him that day, sitting out in the garden, and trying to make as interesting as she could the lessons of Christianity she was inculcating.

He did not speak much, but he listened to what she said. She could not expect him to understand all at once ideas so new to him. He could not identify his grandmother in any form but the one he knew, and once, he asked, if she would be let out of the coffin when she got to heaven?

When Charles heard the account of the gipsy from his wife, his first suggestion was that the child should be sent to the workhouse, but Eva was not willing. She had been wishing, she said, for a little boy to attend on her in the garden, to carry her watering-pot and basket, and reach and fetch for her, as she found much labour fatigued her, and she petitioned Charles to allow her to keep this one for the purpose. He thought an older boy would be more useful to her; but Eva said this one would grow quickly, and he would be more easily trained young.

“Do as you like; my love,” replied Charles, who was busy correcting proof-sheets, and thought but little about the matter.

For a few days Eva let the child amuse himself as he would. He liked hanging about the other children, listening to their prattle and watching their gambols, but he held aloof shyly, and would not join them. Sometimes, when the recollection

of his grandmother would come over him, he would sit down and cry piteously, then no one could soothe him but Eva.

When he had become more habituated to his loss and his altered mode of life, she sent him to the parochial school in the village, and out of school-hours employed him in light offices of attendance on herself, chiefly about her flowers. At the Sunday-school he was in her class. Long before he could learn with the others, the bright and handsome gipsy boy was allowed to stand at the foot of the class, and he would fix his clear dark eyes upon the face that always looked so kindly at him, and try to take in the substance of her words.

“Who is that pretty little boy I see in your class latterly?” asked Agnes Clifton, as she and Eva exchanged their usual civilities on meeting in the school-house.

“He is the grandson of a gipsy woman, who died lately,” replied Eva, coldly.

To no one, not even to Charles, did she reveal the particulars of his birth, as related to her by the dying gipsy. She saw no use in casting a reflection on his birth; in after days it might cause him sorrow. It could not injure any one

that he should be believed the gipsy's grand-child.

From the first he evinced great aptitude for learning. He got over the uninteresting drudgery of rudiments in a way that surprised the master. Once over them, he learnt with a rapidity which showed Eva, that if it continued, the pupil would soon outstrip the teacher's power of instruction. Some things she taught him herself; a little French, a little poetry, some biography: she selected that of characters, who, contending against disadvantages of birth and circumstances, had raised themselves to eminence by their own exertions; and she was pleased to see that he perused such lives with interest and avidity, and that by the way he reverted to them afterwards, he had evidently been pondering over them in his own mind.

These lessons were generally given out of doors; on a mossy bank, beneath a large chestnut-tree which grew at the bottom of the garden, and at the foot of which ran a small bright stream of very limpid water. There, surrounded by the richest stores of nature's treasury, the wide expanse of varied scenery on one side, the tastefully adorned garden on the other; the cool

ripple of the brook below, the grateful shade of the tree above; the bank all covered with wild flowers, to the eye of a botanist even more beautiful than the brilliant hues of their gorgeous brethren of the parterre; her children oft-times at play within her sight—there sat Eva training the young mind she had rescued from ignorance and infamy, bending over the beautiful face that was upraised to hers, and looking, with a fondness that surprised herself, into the clear intelligent eyes which seemed to drink in so eagerly what she said.

Never did the boy weary of listening. As long as she continued to speak, his eyes were riveted upon her: often, when she ceased, they remained in hungry anticipation of her beginning again. The only interruption he ever seemed to brook without impatience, was when the little Eva came to ask him to plant a flower, or weed her garden, or draw her doll's cart. Then he would start up with glad alacrity, and watch his benefactress' eye for permission to go. He lived at the laundry. It had been the gate-house to the entrance to the old rectory, which was now the back way to the new. Eva had placed in it the widow of a slater who had been killed by a fall from the tower of the church, which he was

repairing, and gave her the washing of the family as a means of support. She was a tidy, respectable woman, of middle age. She was glad to earn the additional remuneration which care of the boy procured for her, and in the evenings she found him company. His food came from the rectory. It was wholesome and nutritious, but very plain; milk and broth, stirabout and brown bread, and on Sunday a bit of meat. Eva did not think it well to give the boy an idea that he was to be reared in luxury; on the contrary, all her teaching tended to impress on him that he had to work his own way in the world: all that he was to expect was assistance. But, sometimes, when the little Eva petitioned to be allowed to carry out some of her pudding, for "poor Ha'ld," her mother's discipline was not severe enough to resist the temptation of gratifying both children.

In a corner of the laundry kitchen was a little nook appropriated to the orphan. There he kept his books, on a shelf of his own workmanship; a little box of tools, chiefly presents from the rectory children, suggestions of their mother's; an old blotter that he had converted into a scrap book, and pasted such scraps and pictures as a boy can come at, over the ink-stained leaves, between

which he was pressing some specimens of butterflies; a china inkstand, representing two rampant dogs (with the trunk of a hollow tree between them for the ink), in the fashion of the lion and unicorn in the royal arms: their cocked-up tails and one vigorously thrown-out paw had been broken off, still they were objects of great admiration to Harold; a geranium in a pot, bestowed out of Eva's garden, and which was carefully aired on the window-sill all day, and housed in the corner at night, wound up the collection — treasures to a boy who had never owned anything. But he felt rather crestfallen, one day, when the young Eva came down and overhauled the valuables he had been expatiating on to her, to find that she held them in very light estimation. After all riches is but a relative term.

CHAPTER XIX.

MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

ABOUT this time Eva achieved a plan she had long been contemplating, of effecting a meeting with her mother. She had repeatedly written most persuasive letters to that dear friend, to come and visit her in the home, which, but for her counsels, had never been hers. But Mrs. Desmond's feelings of estrangement towards her own family had always been a barrier to her wishing to find herself among them, or to inflict on herself the embarrassment of encountering them with alienated affections. She, in her turn, had frequently written to urge Eva to come with her family to Glenmore.

Mr. Desmond, whose versatile mind never adhered to any opinion long, was most anxious that those whom he had forbidden ever to enter his door again, should come and visit him. For a while after the marriage, he had seemed almost angry, certainly was not gratified, that the Stan-

hopes met with no misfortunes, and was quite disappointed that he had no opportunity of grumbling. Eva had never mentioned their anxieties regarding a curacy, or it would have been a *bonne bouche* to him. She always wrote cheerily. At first he affected not to believe; said, "All very fine upon paper ; Eva was ready at the pen, and could gloss things over." Then it was, " All very fine while it lasts. That was the way with Myra. Lived like a fighting cock while it lasted. Then Hassard dies, and comes the smash. Let Stanhope die, and see what his family will have ! One thing certain, I'll have nothing to do with them. They made their bed, let them lie in it."

When the Stanhopes first went to Hilton, he was very angry, called them a pair of fools, to give up their Irish connection and go live in an expensive place like England. It was a most sad thing people would not take advice. Had they consulted him they never should have gone. When he heard of the great kindness which had been shown them on their first arrival, he dared say a good many in Hilton remembered him when he was quartered there and noticed Eva on his account, though no doubt she polished a bit ; she wanted to set off that beautiful match of her

own making. He often consoled himself for the lack of existing misfortunes with anticipations of Charles's death.

"If Charles died, which please God he will not," said Mrs. Desmond, "Eva would have 50*l.* a year, besides the interest of her own 500*l.*"

"If I had my way, and had not a parcel of women tutoring me, she'd have double the interest for that 500*l.*"

"She is content with it as it is. Then there will be the proceeds of her husband's book."

"Very little I expect that will be."

"You cannot possibly tell whether it will be much or little."

"Didn't I see his book? A drier concern I never opened."

"Because it was too learned for you: you do not understand anything about theology."

"Isn't it religious it is?"

"Yes," replied his wife with a smile.

"Well, I should think I know quite as much about religion as you do; I don't see that you're a bit better Christian than I am."

"Very likely not."

"Humph! very likely not. You think all the

time you are. It's wonderful what an opinion some people have of themselves!"

But, by degrees, the conviction of Charles's cleverness, and the truth of Eva's statements, forcibly obtained a reluctant admission into Mr. Desmond's brain, and when his son-in-law obtained the living of Reddestone, he felt he could no longer, with any hope of compelling acquiescence, continue to inveigh against the match. He therefore began to edge round his opinion to the popular side. At first, he contented himself with saying, "That chap was fortunate. They made a lucky hit getting that Hilton curacy. It turned out better than could have been expected." At last, he went on to say, "Stanhope knows his trade, if he knows nothing else: I saw that clearly when he was here, or I never should have given my consent." His opposition to the match once ignored, he ever after treated the subject as if it had never existed. He was very anxious they should come to Glenmore; but a kind of pride—I cannot call it by another name—withheld Eva from wishing to return to the home she had abandoned, until she should be able to do it in such a manner as would reflect great worldly credit on the choice she had made.

"When Charles is a Bishop, I will come," she playfully wrote in answer to one invitation.

But, being very wishful to see her mother, and to show her children to her, she contrived an arrangement of meeting her at Mrs. Stanhope's house in Haddington-road, the expenses of which visit Charles was to defray, by a private agreement with his mother. She took her nurse and three children with her, and the meeting was a very happy one. Eva and her mother slept together in Charles's old room. They conversed half the night. So much had they to talk over which even their voluminous correspondence could not include. Then, there was such exceeding pleasure in displaying and admiring the children. They were lovely children all three, and it was hard to tell whether mother or grandmother felt most pride in the exhibition. They were left very much to themselves, Mrs. Stanhope being as fond of the air as ever, and they did not feel inclined to find any fault with the propensity. But notwithstanding all the opportunity they had, Charles was writing, impatient at the loss of his household treasures, before the half that had to be said was said, and at the end of a fortnight he announced his intention of coming over to take them back.

Eva pleaded for a few days longer. In his reply he told her that Ernest Clifton was coming over to marry his sister to Charles Oakley, his permission having been asked, and as Clifton would take any occasional duty which might occur from Sunday to Sunday, it would give him a clergyman's week to spend in Dublin. He would cross by Holyhead for the purpose of seeing the new bridge which had been erected, and she might expect him late on the following Monday.

But Monday passed, and Charles did not arrive. Every one attributed the delay to some accidental and natural cause, with the exception of Eva, who could not help feeling uneasy, and fancying a thousand misfortunes. She sat up till long after the passengers from the last English packet of the day had arrived in town. Even when she went to bed, instead of talking to her mother as usual, she lay listening for every sound, and conjecturing whether every car that passed might not contain him, maybe with a broken limb; she was persuaded some accident must have occurred. But the night wore wearily away without bringing any intelligence good or bad, and towards morning she fell asleep. She was awakened about eight o'clock, by old Ellen en-

tering her room. She had a visiting card in her hand.

"There is a gentleman below, ma'am, wants to see you."

"Who is he?"

"He says he is just come from England, ma'am; and bid me give this to young Mrs. Stanhope." There was a peculiar expression in old Ellen's face which Eva noted. She seemed to know more than she was telling. Eva held out her hand for the card, and turned deadly pale as she read upon it, 'The Archdeacon of Wilts.' She sprang out of bed "Help me, Ellen! help me on with my clothes. Mother, something has happened, or he would never be here! There, there! I don't want petticoats, give me my dress and a shawl." She hurriedly covered herself, her teeth chattering all the time, and rushed down the stairs, to the head of which she was followed by her mother, looking scarcely less frightened.

A gentleman, dressed in black, was seated at the drawing-room table reading a newspaper. She could not see his face, for the open paper was between it and her.

"Archdeacon!" she exclaimed, springing to-

wards him, and impatiently striking down the paper.

It was Charles—a very amused expression on his usually grave face.

“ How could you be so cruel ! ” she exclaimed in a tone of bitter reproach, no longer able to restrain her tears.

“ A pretty welcome from a man’s wife ! What have I done so heinous ? ”

“ Forgive me, Charles, you frightened me so.”

It took him some little time to comprehend what had occasioned her distress ; when he did he half-laughingly soothed it away. “ I did not mean it, love ; a surprise I certainly intended, but not a fright. Have you no congratulations, my darling, or are you too angry to make them ? ”

“ Congratulations, Charles ! for what ? ”

“ What is on the card ? ”

“ You are not Archdeacon of Wilts ? ”

“ Yes, I am.”

“ What has become of the Archdeacon ? ”

“ He has been made Dean of Chudleigh. That is the reason I was not here last night. The Bishop sent for me to Salisbury and presented me with the Archdeaconry in a very flattering

manner; said, as he had necessarily much intercourse with the Archdeacon, he was happy to have a man for whom he had a personal liking. Some compliments to my slender figure, he also added," continued Charles with a smile.

Eva was enchanted. Clinging round his neck, she had kissed her husband twenty times while he talked, murmuring broken expressions of delight all the time.

"Why, Eva! you seem more pleased than when I got Reddestone. There is only 15*l.* a year attached to the Archdeaconry."

"But the rank, dear Charles, the rank! The high position it will give you."

"You ambitious little woman!"

"And it is one step towards the brougham," she said with a bright, playful smile.

"It shall be a long one. I have been counting the cost, and I think I may let you have the brougham without waiting any longer. We will buy it in Bristol on our way back. Come, now, I want to see the children."

"How did you leave Harold?" she asked, as they went up-stairs together.

"Very well. The master says he learns by instinct. He is to be at Oakley's wedding. The

school-children are all to be there ; and Mr. Clifton gives them a feast."

" When is it to be ? "

" To-morrow."

They were met by the two mothers at the head of the stairs.

" Mother, Charles is an Archdeacon ! " was Eva's joyous exclamation.

" Where are the children ? Here I suppose," and Charles broke from the ladies' congratulations into the nursery, where with shouts of glad surprise little half-clad bodies sprang to his arms ; young hearts to whom it was alike indifferent whether he came as curate or dignitary, to them he was but their father. Eva's thoughts reverted to the returns home of her own father, and how they, young ones, had been used to creep out of the way to escape being scolded or found fault with ; and with a swelling heart she thanked God for the brighter, happier lot He had bestowed upon her own darlings.

Charles was glad to find himself in Dublin once more ; glad to roam about his old haunts, to take his book, and throw himself on the grass beneath the trees in the college gardens, as in former days, and to talk philosophy once more with his old

tutor. Even a little pride might be forgiven him, at returning an honor to his college, not only in achievements but in position. It testified its appreciation of him by an address congratulatory and commendatory, and conferred on him the scarlet hood.

When in the house, he still mechanically sought the seat in the dark front drawing-room, where, for years, he had sat and read. He was seated there one morning, so absorbed in his study that he did not hear the postman's knock, though it was at his very ear, when Eva, an open letter in her hand, rushed in and exclaimed—

“Why, Charles! it is Myra he has married!”

“*Sed agimus secundum consuetudinem,*” said Charles, deliberately repeating the last words of the sentence he was reading, as he slowly looked up from the book. “What are you saying, my dear?”

“It is Myra Clifton Charles Oakley has married.” She held up the inside of a highly glazed and silvered envelope, on which the name “Myra Clifton” was engraved: she had cards in her other hand.

“Well! who did you think he was to marry?”

"Why, Agnes to be sure."

"I never heard any one given to him but Myra : did you?"

Eva was silent : she did not know what to say ; she had nothing to say ; she had only her own pre-conceived notion that it must be Agnes. With the exception of the one day, on which he did not give her much definite information, she had never conversed with Mr. Oakley on the subject : she so rarely went to Oakstone that she never happened to meet him there, so she had no opportunity of ascertaining from observation where his partiality lay ; and as there appeared a tacit understanding in the neighbourhood that estrangement existed between the Rectory and the Hall, Eva seldom heard any mention made of the Cliftons or their concerns ; hence it was, that she had remained in ignorance of a circumstance well known in the vicinity.

Towards Myra, though she never evinced it in any way, the remnant of feeling which lingered in Eva's heart, was more kindly than towards Agnes. Myra had taken no part in the incidents of Ernest's separation with her, she had manifested no dislike to the connection, rather the reverse, and a grateful recognition of the fact had always lurked in

Eva's remembrance, to Agnes's prejudice. Still it was not in her nature not to feel commiseration for any one who was unhappy. She felt for Agnes. Not that she ever showed it; her outward demeanour always displayed the utmost indifference to all affairs of the Cliftons individually and collectively, but alone and in private she often thought of her and felt for her. It seemed almost a wrong: Agnes had loved him so long; Myra's affection could only be of a late date. It is a bitter thing to be supplanted by a sister, above all a younger one; a stranger brings less anguish. Eva thought what would have been her feelings if her sister had become Ernest Clifton's wife. True, that Charles Oakley had never cared for Agnes; but then she thought he did, and the blow was the same. She gazed at the cards—they were directed in Agnes's hand-writing—contemplating the amount of pain their distribution must have cost her. She could bring a large stock of experience to help the calculation. She remembered now that Agnes had of late looked ill and dejected. Her passing thought had been that it was agitation, but it was now more justly explained. Little Harold told her afterwards that he had been at the wedding with the other

children, and that the bridesmaid cried more than the bride.

"We can all feel for ourselves," she murmured more in sorrow than in anger. "Agnes knows now what the severing of ties is: she used to exhort me to bear it philosophically, can she turn in her philosophy on her own heart?"

CHAPTER XX.

THE FALLEN STAR.

THE Stanhopes returned home ; returned in the new brougham which had so long been the object of Eva's ambition, and which her fond husband felt as much pleasure in gratifying, as she did in the possession. Perhaps a little vanity must be confessed to, when she went in it, the Archdeacon's lady, to pay the wedding visit at Oakstone. Unwilling to encounter Agnes in a *tête-à-tête*, if she should happen to be alone, she called on a lady in the neighbourhood and asked her to accompany her, thereby precluding all possibility of any allusion to the past. They saw Mr. Clifton and his two daughters. Ernest had returned to Grimstone Priory ; the newly married pair were in Brussels. The lady who was with Eva, remarked to her, when they got into the carriage to return, that she thought Miss Clifton looked very ill.

"I have not heard of her being unwell," replied Eva coldly.

When the Oakleys returned, she visited them at their own house, and though they never became intimate, more cordiality existed in their intercourse than between Eva and any other of her relations. Charles's new duties involved a good deal of absence from home. He obtained the Bishop's sanction to his supplying his place in these unavoidable suspensions of parochial exertion, by a curate; the appointment of whom also increased his opportunities of pursuing his literary avocations, which had now greatly multiplied, and which, though not very remunerative, placed his name high in the ranks of theological and philosophical literature.

Eva, meanwhile, watched with kind and judicious care over the gipsy boy who had so fortuitously became her ward. Finding that his great talents and insatiable desire of employing them, made the village school a very inadequate source of supply, she wished to send him to the collegiate school of Cheltenham. But, on inquiry, she discovered that doing so could only be effected by the previous purchase of a share in the institution, which, the college being in high repute at the

time, were selling at 90*l.* each. She was therefore obliged to relinquish her intention, and send the boy to Salisbury. As a means of defraying the expenses this incurred, she applied for, and obtained the literary engagement which had formerly been offered to her by the publisher of her tale. For a stated quantity of contribution she was to receive 5*l.* a month, which, with a little addition from her privy purse, covered the school bill. In consigning the young Harold to Dr. Moyston, no allusion was made to his origin. Eva only spoke of him as her ward, and in his outfit was no indication of an inferior rank. It was similar to that of other boys in the middle class of gentry. He was therefore received in the school as an equal, and from his talents and generous disposition soon became a favourite.

When he came to Reddestone to pass the holidays, from the habits he had acquired from associating with the sons of gentlemen, the cultivation of mind resulting from the great proficiency he made in study, and the grace and gentility of his appearance and manners, Eva felt he would be wholly out of place in his former position, and for a while was puzzled what to do with him. At length she arranged that he should dine when

she lunched, at the children's dinner, and in the afternoons she got Mr. Trainor, the curate, to take charge of him and direct his studies; the mornings he spent with the children, or, over his books, in his benefactress's boudoir. To this disposition, Charles, though at first reluctant, eventually gave his sanction. He thought Eva was placing the boy in a false position; that if she reared him to a respectable line of business, or if books were the bent of his mind, to be an usher in a school, she should be doing very well for him, and it would be a mistaken kindness to give him ideas beyond his expectations. However, the boy's own refinement made it difficult for a fitting place, in a lower grade, to be assigned him, and Eva was permitted to carry out her arrangement.

Divided in heart as Eva was with her Oakstone relatives, an event now occurred which associated them in one common and poignant sorrow. Reports had frequently reached Reddestone of the extreme Tractarian views which Ernest Clifton was step by step adopting. At length, they exceeded what could be tolerated, even under a bishop lenient to such principles, and who had hitherto contented himself with occasional warn-

ings, which had not succeeded in obtaining modifications. Ernest was now cited to appear before him to answer the charges against him. A few days afterwards, with feelings not easily described, Eva read in the paper the following paragraph :—

“ The Reverend Ernest Clifton, rector of Grimstone Priory, has resigned his living in the Church of England and gone over to Rome, into the communion of which Church he was received on Sunday last.”

This was a step which Eva had foreseen and feared, because, from her knowledge of Ernest’s character, she had been convinced that he would adhere religiously to what he esteemed right, and no worldly inducements would operate to effect a compromise with his conscience; and if once that conscience erred, the result would be fatal.

With bitterness and sorrow she contemplated that dereliction from the high path of duty to the track of a mirage. True that he was nothing to her: never could be; but he had been once enshrined in the innermost sanctuary of her heart, and she could not so forget it, as to view without pain that moral degradation: that desertion of the standard for which his fathers had fought and bled; that

abandonment of a faith for which martyrs had embraced the stake; the forswearing of his ordination oath; the renunciation of a religion which, the first truth infused into our dawning intellect, the first aspiration of our infant lispings, inculcated in every early lesson, engrained with every successive hour of our progressive existence, seems to become an integral part of our being; our guiding principle, our purest feeling, our holiest hope. Oh, it is a traitorous fallacy to abjure a religion thus consecrated to our affections! It seemed to Eva, that everything connected with Ernest was ordained to cause her pain.

“Had I been his wife this never, never would have been,” she said with mournful regret, to herself; and she spoke truly.

“They sold true gold for base coin,” said Charles Oakley, “and they have their reward.”

Old Mr. Clifton’s sorrow knew no bounds. He sent for Archdeacon Stanhope, and conjured him to accompany him to see his son, and try to dissuade him from the step he had taken. The Archdeacon complied, because he thought it his duty not to withhold assistance when he was asked for it; but he was firmly convinced it was a useless errand. A man like Ernest, who had

changed, from what he esteemed conviction, was not likely to be persuaded into an opposite opinion. Charles could make no impression, and he returned with the broken-hearted father from their unavailing expedition. Ernest went to Rome, and entered the Romish priesthood there, volunteering to accompany a mission preparing to go into Africa at the time. This he did from a conscientious scruple that having once put his hand to the plough, he must not turn back. It was an act his father never recovered. He had never held up his head after that son of his pride and affection renounced the religion in which he had reared him, but this last act culminated his wretchedness. Charles was sent for in great haste one night; Mr. Clifton had fallen from his chair whilst Agnes was reading a chapter in the Bible to him before they went to bed. A horseman was immediately despatched for the doctor, who came in haste; but long ere he reached Oakstone, Mr. Clifton was beyond the reach of human aid. He died of paralysis of the brain.

Charles remained with Agnes and her sister until the Oakleys arrived. He would not allow Eva to be sent for; she was near her confinement, and he thought the scene would be too much for

her; but he begged that he himself might be spared in no way, if he could be of either use or comfort; and he was much of both to the sorrowing orphan girls: kindly kept from them all that was harassing or distressing, and piously led them to seek for consolation from the Fountain-Head of love and pity.

CHAPTER XXI.

INDIAN COUSINS.

TIME passed pleasantly and profitably with the Stanhopes. They used their talents as faithful servants, and God gave them increase. Everything beneath their influence appeared to prosper; and as to that quiver, the filling of which the Psalmist speaks of as such an auxiliary to felicity, it was most steadily progressing towards the optable consummation. In course of time, they received a visit from Major and Mrs. Ingram, who having come from India to empty *their* quiver of its contents, and leave them to a colder climate and a grandmother's care, were making a tour through their Wiltshire relatives previous to their return to the East. They came from the Oakleys to Reddestone, and were to go from thence to Hislop. The handsome Jessie could afford to forgive her Aunt Herbert the interference which had once been so vexatious; for she had gained the point at issue, and the victor

can well be generous. Still, there was a yet unsmothered spark of bitterness, in the laughing irony with which she said to Eva, as they sat in her boudoir the morning after her arrival, and she had been expatiating to her cousin on the delectations of Calcutta life, and the gaiety of Government House,

“I often thought, when we were enjoying all the good things of Willie’s fine staff appointment there, what a foolish Jessie I should have been, had I broken with him, because, forsooth! my aunt Herbert wished it. What amends would she have made me, I wonder? If she says one word to me when I go up to Hislop, aye, so much as tucks up her lip, I will ask her if she intended Clara Neville for him.”

Eva’s lip only replied by a quiver; Jessie did not heed it, and continued: “What a sacrifice that was! Ernest Clifton, the very model of manly beauty! You and he, I know, never got on well together; but spar how they would, no one could help according him admiration for physical beauty: Willie, though he was often jealous of my admiration of him, says himself, if Ernest had been an officer he would have been the handsomest man in the world; and how a fine inde-

pendent fellow like him came to marry that hideous ape, he cannot conceive.

"Yielded to persuasion, I suppose," said Eva faintly.

"That and the money, I fancy, finished him : I never thought he cared for money, but I suppose he did. Such an end to come to ! and how it has turned out!"

" Sadly, indeed."

"I am sure I should have thought that precious transaction would have kept Aunt Herbert from making or meddling with Hymen for the rest of her days; but Myra Oakley told me she spent a small fortune in stamps, writing down to Oakstone, about Charles's disqualifications for a husband. Uncle Clifton said he wished Rebecca would let Providence alone, and not be trying to help it, and Charles said, if Mrs. Herbert met Eve going into Paradise, she would recommend her to turn back, and on no account to take Adam, because—he was the first man. I recollect, long ago, Willie was used to say he was sure she would not let him go to heaven for fear there would be poor girl-angels there. It was well for you, Eva, the sea was between you, and she could not get her claw between you and the Archdeacon,

or she would have made it as clear as noon-day, that he would not do, because he was not a bishop."

"Charles was a curate when I married him."

"That would have been impediment just and sufficient; as if every one must not have a beginning: Willie was an ensign when he and I 'set up' as she called it. The Archdeacon, I dare say, will be a bishop yet, and you a bishopess; what she will never be."

"Respectability is not appreciated," said Eva bitterly. "And you, I suppose, will be *Madame la generale* by then."

"Perhaps: *Madame la colonelle* at all events. Willie's regiment got so cut up at Ferozeshah that promotion has been rapid. Whatever have you here, Eva?"

She had opened a door in one end of the room, which communicated with a closet beyond.

"The queerest collection of rubbish—old jars, irons, wires, sticks, dirty bottles, glasses with spouts, glasses without spouts, pots and pans, brushes and rags," she laughingly enumerated, as her eye ran over the contents.

"That is Harold's sanctum," replied Eva.

"Who is Harold?"

"An orphan I have the charge of. His great

turn is natural philosophy, and he had no place to keep his things in, poor boy ! The Archdeacon would not allow him to have them in his room, because Charlie sleeps there, and his father feared some accident might occur with those acids and experiments ; so I emptied that closet for him last holidays. He calls it his laboratory. As you say, every one must have a beginning."

" You are a good creature, Eva ! You were always that. But what an effect the profession one marries into has on them ! How the church has sobered you. I recollect the time one could seldom look at you without blinking, now, a painter might covet you for a model for his Madonna, and here am I, after serving my apprenticeship in India, as wild and as wicked as ever."

" Who is it says that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught as men take diseases, one of another ? " asked the Archdeacon, who had come in while the last sentence was being pronounced.

" I don't know, Archdeacon. Don't bring your learning to bear upon me, or you will annihilate me at once. I am the greatest ignoramus you ever met ; unless, may be, Willie. It was very well we two went together ; neither can reflect on the other ; and there are you and Eva all learning and

wisdom : I suppose matched to a 't' also. Talking of matches, where is your sister Myra, now she is married again, Eva?"

"At her husband's place, near Glenmore. He was a widower with one child."

"And how many has she?"

"Two. She lost one of scarletina, and the last poor baby was still-born."

"Edward would not have such luck."

"Oh, Jessie!"

"Oh, Eva! I am not in the Church. When I heard of their last being twins, I was nearly as bad as Aunt Herbert."

"God sent them, poor little things."

"I suppose so."

"Mary's are nice children, if she had time to do them justice. Two or three of them were here during her confinement, and they were very good."

"More than they are at home. She told me how kind you had been to take them. Mary says, you have got the heart of the whole family. But, come out ; the day is delicious. Could we get across the river? I should like to go see those two poor girls."

"I am afraid not. I will order the brougham." She rang the bell.

CHAPTER XXII.

WRECKED ON THE GOLDEN SANDS.

THERE are times when everything in nature—every thing animate and inanimate—takes the hue and impression of our own feelings, wholly independent of any distinctive attribute or property of their own. It is a most singular and illusive moral phenomenon, this adaptation of everything external and internal to the eye with which we, responsible agents teeming with intellectual powers as we be, regard it—more especially as it is not confined to any particular kind of vision, but extends to all. Are we biased? with what facility evidences present themselves to our observation, from which very evidences, had our inclinations tended the other way, we could have educed justifications for them, and would ourselves have been deceived into the belief that we were dealing with the case by its merits. Are we partial? what perfections multiply in the object, dazzling us, fond fools! into assurance

that they exist. The very same act, which, performed by one we felt aversion to would have been a subject of vexation, is from them, a matter of pleasure to us. Are we happy! what golden tints does every aspect assume? If the sun gives out no rays, we miss not their sheen from the earth; it is supplied from that within. With what elastic resilience do little annoyances and misfortunes, which would gall painfully enough a less buoyant heart, now glance off without even an abrasion of the smooth surface. Clouds skim lightly past, rain falls unnoted, everything we glance at reflects the sunshine we shed upon it, and we believe what we look on to be its own effulgence. And again, when the heart is dark, how sable is the picture! The brightest rays that can illume the earth or tinge the sky, neither gladden the eye nor warm the breast; all, partaking of the heart's gloom, looks dark, cold and dreary as its own depths, bringing no cheer and enlivening no thought. Unheeded beneath our foot are trodden down the fairest flowers that ever encarpeted a path, unnoted before our eyes are passed the loveliest triumphs of scenery: treasure whose possession was once deemed enchantment, we now turn from as valueless; the only thing perhaps, we value, is not, and

all else seems vanity : the grasshopper is a burden and solace but a mockery.

It was a bright and beautiful summer morning—early morning—the sun had just cast off the robe of mist that had veiled his rising, and was shedding his undimmed refulgence on the dew-dropped grass and sparkling water, when Eva, whose eye beheld not the gladsome scene, whose heart was closed to every ray, left the rectory, and, followed by the stable-man, took her way towards the river. The man put her across in the boat, and received orders to wait for her return ; and alone, with steps sometimes slow and feeble, sometimes hurried and uneven, she crossed the fields in the direction of Oakstone. From the bottom of the terrace wall she reconnoitred the house. Both the sashes and the blinds of the windows in one room in the western end were raised. She knew the room well. It was a spare one, in the large hanging wardrobe of which, she and Agnes had formerly been used to hang up their ball dresses, when she was staying at Oakstone during her aunt's lifetime. This recurred to her as she gazed up at the windows. It is wonderful how vividly gleams of past gaiety will sometimes reappear in moments of heavy sorrow : what frivolous trifles

will oft-times flit through the brain when occupied with momentous concerns. Eva stood for a long time motionless underneath the windows, thinking, though scarce conscious of what she thought. Recalling herself to things actual, she ascended the steps at the corner of the terrace, and approached the Gothic door which opened on it.

From her previous experience of the place, she knew this door was never locked at night. Softly and stealthily she turned the handle; strange agitating feelings beating with strong strokes upon her heart: she had never passed through that door since she had been as a sister in the house long years before. She stood for some time listening, the door in her trembling hand, then closing it, she rolled up her handkerchief and laid it on the ground between the door and the jamb, to prevent the bolt shooting and making a noise. She did not ascend the stairs which led from this point; that would oblige her to go along the gallery past the doors of the family. Instead, therefore, she crept along the lower passage, which led to the staircase-hall. For a long time she listened, before she ventured to open the communicating door. No one was stirring. Every place looked gloomy, so silent and so void. A

strange feeling it was to be thus an alien in places once so familiar.

"If any one does see me," she argued to herself, "I can say I have come to be with Agnes." She felt a little emboldened by this refuge to fall back on, in case she should be required to account for her presence. She opened the door, and having taken the same precautions against its shutting, as with the other, she ascended the grand staircase, and sought the room, the windows of which she had seen open.

At this door she paused; apparently, not, as at the other doors, from fear of discovery; but as if some feeling of repugnance withheld her: a change came over her face which, only indicative of trepidation before, now assumed an expression of extreme suffering. She bent her ear to the key-hole, and holding in her breath, listened with an intensity which would have detected even the breathing of any one within. But all was still: that room had no living occupant. Noiselessly she turned the handle and entered, cast one anxious hurried look around, to assure herself she was alone with the dead, and felt a nervous awe when she found it was so: a moment she hesitated, threw it off, walked up to the bed,

and stood beside the corpse which lay upon it.

That face, eminently handsome as it had been in life, was pre-eminently so in death. The finished chiselling of the features' classic outline harmonized in a remarkable degree with the unutterable repose in which they were veiled. Death had been too recent for any change, except for beauty, to have taken place, and the unsunken eye was full and round beneath the lid which never more would rise, while the more than usual length of its dark lashes was distinctly visible, as they lay upon the death-white cheek below. The large black whiskers had been shaved off in the later years of life, but the hair, uncut during illness, clustered in its former luxuriance above the pallid temples. The lips were sufficiently apart to permit a gleam of the white teeth being seen, and there was an expression of ineffable sweetness about the mouth—at all times critically beautiful. He looked younger than he was. Death seemed to have remitted some of the years of life, and had swept away the lines which care and thought had marked on that pale forehead, leaving it smooth and open as in early youth, and, in the other lineaments, had softened the

chiselling which the iron of austerity had enharshed. The frame, once so full of manly vigour, was greatly attenuated. On its breast the thin white hands were folded.

Scarcely less deathlike seemed the figure which stood beside him—stood, so mute, so still, so motionless, one could hardly guess she breathed. Her face had the same ash-like hue: all light seemed struck from it, all expression discharged; its muscles appeared to have relaxed and stiffened, and it wore the rigid look of a corpse—the ghastliness of death without its beauty: in her limbs was the same pliantless tension.

There are some hearts which feel too intensely, almost to admit of any other function acting at the same time. It would be hard to calculate the amount of pain Eva supported in that visit to the dead. It suspended every other feeling—almost life itself. More time passed than she was aware of; her thoughts took no heed of time. At no moment of our lives, perhaps, can the imagination so nearly approach the conception of eternity, as when gazing upon the newly dead. The spirit of the form before us has realized it; has no further part with time: the material frame in which we knew it, and from which it has but now

parted, seems a still connecting link between us and it. The icy coldness of that form, where hot life once throbbed so quick; the deep, deep stillness, where intellect has now no sway, and feeling now no tide; the utter darkness of that eye, which shall never pass away: our reason always knew, but now, for the first time, our heart feels, that it is for ever and for ever; and short as the finite mind must always come of the boundlessness of infinity—in the hopelessness of that realization, is some glimmer of the endlessness of eternity.

There was a movement in the next room, where those who had been left to watch, slept. It recalled Eva to consciousness of her situation. She gazed her farewell look at that handsome form, which had been the dark cloud on the summer of her existence, and whose own fate had been so hapless. Gazed long at the hands in their folded stillness: once or twice she put forth her own hand, and drew it back again: she could not summon courage to encounter the clay-cold touch of those, in whose warm clasp hers had so often thrilled. One *last* look with its aggregate of misery, and hastily she stole away. Servants must be rising, for she heard movements in the

attics ; but no one molested her : she went as she came. Her own house gained, she got to her room ; a cold damp feeling was coming over her, her limbs trembled violently, and her eyesight was getting dim. Unable to stand, she sank into an arm-chair, and fainted.

Ernest Clifton's death, though early, had not been unexpected. The loss of his health had been attributed to over-work ; but there was more than mere physical pressure. He was not a happy man. The chill of his domestic affections ; the harassing doubts which had long disturbed his peace, and in the end effected his apostasy ; the contemplation of the sorrow he had given to a family, who looked upon him as a fallen angel ; all had weighed heavily on his sensitive temperament, and combined with vigils, fastings and heavy work, soon bent that once compact and powerful frame. Nor did the Church into which he had thrown himself wholly satisfy him. It did not content him on every point, and leave no want unsufficed. He could not return to the creed which he had abandoned, yet he was not convinced by the one he had adopted. When he first felt the inroads of illness, he did not give up ; he worked on. At last he became too ill

to leave his couch. When he felt the approach of death, his thoughts turned homeward, and he was brought by easy stages to England. He never left his room after he reached Oakstone.

Charles Stanhope saw him often. He laboured assiduously to lead back the erring soul to the path it had wandered from, and in some sort succeeded. Ernest would not take the sacrament from his hands, but he liked to hear him read and pray, and often seemed to derive comfort from his conversation. He died unanointed, and left a written direction that he was to be buried in the vault at Reddestone, according to the rites of the Established Church. There was no will, and Edward Clifton came into possession of Oakstone as heir-at-law. Clara's wealth remained in trust for her heirs—the housekeeper's bouncing boys—after her death should take place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REVELATIONS.

EVA did not leave her room during the day on which she had visited the remains. She felt very ill, and, for the most part, was unable to rise from the bed. She prayed much. There was a solace in prayer, though she hardly knew how to shape it. Her belief did not admit the efficacy of prayer for the dead, yet she longed to pray for him: it was all that could be done for him now; and she tried to cast back her prayers to the time when he was not beyond their reach, murmuring supplicating hopes that mercy had been extended to him; breathing wistful aspirations that his spirit was before the Throne whither they were ascending. It is so crushing a desolation to feel that the loved are beyond the reach even of prayer, that scarcely can our heart admit it. Can they be so lost to us that even in heaven there is no help?

Towards evening Eva rose and went to her dressing-case. She opened its secret drawer, and

taking out Ernest's ring, put it on her finger. There could be no wrong to her husband, she thought, in wearing a token from the dead. As she was closing the drawer, her eye fell upon the packet which had been given her by the gipsy woman, which she had been enjoined not to open until *he* should be no more, and she had placed it with the ring which was connected with a similar inhibition by her own feeling of right. She sat down and opened the parcel: not with much interest, for she believed it to be some vaticination or other; and singularly as the gipsy's predictions had come true, she attributed it entirely to accident; her mind being above and beyond the influence of superstition. All accident it had not been.

But a short time before her encounter with the cousins in the quarry lane of Reddestone, the gipsy's company had been encamped in the neighbourhood of Hislop; and one day that Mr. Herbert and his wife were seated on the gnarled trunk of a fallen tree, in the wood above the house, screened by the thick foliage of a tree behind them, the woman had overheard him communicate his plan of marrying the heiress to Ernest Clifton (with whom the gipsy was already acquainted through some antecedents)

and also, propitiating Mrs. Herbert's abetting consent, by representing the influence which such an acquisition of wealth would have in elevating her own family. The prophecies of the results of the marriage were but deductions which the crafty eavesdropper believed probable, from the physical and mental defectuosity on both sides of the heiress's family. And as for Eva's future prospects, all was of course mere guess-work : a lucky hit, adventitiously coming true by the turn up of life's die. Eva believed it to be all so, and she opened the paper, more because it obtruded itself on her notice, than for any more interested motive.

But something in that paper arrested her attention with a power she did not anticipate. Many times she read it ; no emotion of joy or sorrow depicted on her countenance, only surprise. It was a copy of the register of young Harold's baptism, at a parish church in Oxfordshire, and contained the real names of his parents. With it was a letter yellow and discoloured, and in an almost schoolboy hand, but whose characters she yet recognized, which left no doubt of that youthful indiscretion of the writer ; the only one of a lifetime, and the result of which he had never

known. Long, long she gazed; holding both papers so tight in her clenched hands, as if she feared the very breeze from the window would waft them away from her, and divulge their secret. Then taking down the dates and the name of the parish; all the time grasping the papers firm, she lighted a taper and held them to it, never taking her eyes off them, until all that remained of them was ashy film.

Charles was absent. He had been obliged to go to London on business the evening of the death, and did not return until the day before the funeral. On that evening the young Eva came with a very sorrowful face, into her mother's boudoir, where Mrs. Stanhope was sitting idle and very listless; an unusual thing for her.

"What has happened, darling?" she asked, as her eye noted her child's face.

"Papa was angry with Harold for swinging me too high, and it was not Harold's fault, it was mine; I made him," said the little girl in broken accents.

"It was both your faults, Eva. Harold ought not to have done it, and you ought not to have asked him: your papa said before you were not to swing high."

"But papa said he would send Harold back to school before the holidays were over," said poor Eva, whose lips quivered into a great many shapes notwithstanding her efforts to pucker them up and keep them together.

"He would deserve it if he has disobeyed the Archdeacon. But your father is so very kind, perhaps he may forgive him. Send Harold to me: I want him."

The child came close up to her mother, and clasping her little hands upon her arm, looked up with an expression of the most beseeching supplication, as she exclaimed, "Mamma, will you scold him too?"

Her mother was too subdued that night for any exertion; she only said. "No, love: not this time. Send him to me."

The little girl went on the errand, and in a few minutes the tall graceful boy, now about fifteen years of age, entered the room. There was rather a shy look of guilt upon his usually bright and open face. But he loved his benefactress sincerely, and never felt constraint in her presence. He came straight up to her and apologized for what he had done. Eva scarcely heard him. In a low voice of forced calmness, she said—

"I sent for you, my dear, to say I wish you to attend the funeral to-morrow. You are to wear the black clothes that you will find on the table in your room. Stand at the head of—of the—near the Archdeacon. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"That will do. Have you had your tea, dear?"

"No ma'am: not yet."

"Well, go to the schoolroom, it must be ready."

The boy hesitated for a moment, raised his dark eyes to her face: Eva now understood the fascination those eyes had ever possessed for her—with a very ingenuous manner he expressed a hope that she was not displeased with him.

"About the swinging? never do it again, my boy. Obey the Archdeacon in all things." She spoke very gently, put her arm kindly round the orphan's neck, and the kiss she pressed upon his cheek was loving as any mother's kiss.

There was one attic window in Reddestone rectory which commanded a view of the church-yard. The Oakstone vault lay at the east end of the church, and as the church was to the west of the rectory, there was nothing to intercept the view of the vault from this, the only up-stairs window which looked that way, and which formed

a little gable in the centre of the roof on the western end of the house. Every blind in the rectory was down with the exception of this one, which was partially up; and from this window, habited in deep mourning, Eva watched the funeral. She had locked the door on going in; and secured from observation, knelt, with a Prayer Book in her hand, and followed the service as nearly as she could. She saw her surpliced husband meet the coffin and precede it into the church, saw it issue again and borne to the vault; read the words "dust to dust and ashes to ashes," as was consigned for ever to the darkness of the tomb that splendid form whose beauty her passionate love had once made an idol, and which idolatry had brought such heavy punishment with it. She watched for young Harold, and saw him standing modestly back, but still taking the place she had desired him. From respect to the Archdeacon, the undertaker had given the lad a black scarf and hat-band, and she was pleased — if any feeling within her heart at the time could be so called — to see it. She saw the vault close and the people disperse. *He* was left alone with his comrade dead.

Eva had given directions that her children were not to play out of doors when the funeral

was going forward, but now that it was over and the interdiction taken off, they broke forth a merry band. Their gay prattle and light laughter jarred, for the first time, upon their mother's heart. The Archdeacon with Harold appeared within the gate. They had delayed after the others, as Charles was speaking to the clerk. Eva saw her children bound to meet them. The young Eva put her hand into Harold's and walked with him, examining his unusual habiliments, and asking questions of childish curiosity of the scene he had taken part in. Her mother stole down the back-stairs and out of the house, that her husband might not see her face. For hours she did not return. When she met him at dinner she was calm. To Harold in private she often talked of that day: she appeared to wish him never to forget it. It was the first imposing funeral he had ever been present at, and it made an impression on him; but he knew of no interest beyond.

Eva had not done well in indulging that melancholy desire to visit the body of her early love. For some time she had resisted it; but the deep longing to look upon the face once more, before it was lost for ever to human sight, became irresistible, and she gave way to it as we have

seen. But the effect of that stolen indulgence did not pass away. She was ill without being able to assign any cause for it; her strength became prostrated, and two or three times she experienced a recurrence of the fainting fit with which she had been seized on her return from the chamber of death. Once, when she was standing by her husband's side, looking at their children at play, suddenly, without having received any warning, she sank insensible into his arms. Charles became greatly alarmed. He wished to take her to London for advice: Eva did not feel equal to the journey, and was unwilling to make the exertion; but her husband, who was more frightened than he acknowledged to her, very firmly though very gently insisted, and she was constrained to yield. The doctor said it appeared to him that her nervous system had received a shock from which it had not been able to rally. He recommended total change of scene as the only means of recovering it.

She had always had a wish to go abroad, and her kind husband made arrangements to indulge it. But Eva well and Eva sick were very different. She had now no pleasure in the thought, and pleaded hard to be taken home instead. But

Charles continued his preparations. He went with her himself, but, as he could not remain the whole time, he allowed her to have her nurse and baby, the last baby—whilst the elder children were left with their governess. The travellers crossed to Ostend and went down the Rhine, stopping at the places which had most interest for them, and visiting all that Eva's strength admitted of. They penetrated as far as Geneva, Charles having a desire to visit Calvin's city. In the vicinity they found the Bloomfields, sojourning for the summer in a cottage most beautifully situated on the lake. Charles took another close to them, where he settled his wife under their auspices, and having bribed her into contentment, returned home himself. The bribe was this.

It was Eva's wish to bring Harold up to the Church. She had frequently spoken to her husband about it. She said God had been very bountiful to them, and she did not think they could testify their gratitude in a more acceptable manner than by dedicating to his service, a life thus rescued from iniquity. Charles acknowledged and appreciated the feeling; but he considered the expenses of a university education beyond what, in justice to his own family, he ought to expend

upon another than a member of it. But anxious to indemnify Eva for the compulsory surrender of her own will to his, he now made her a promise that if he found a great amendment in her health on his return, he would make an exertion to put her protégé into holy orders. He thought by placing him to graduate at the Dublin university, and arranging for him to live at Haddington-road, he might manage to accomplish it. Eva wished the boy to go to Cambridge; but Charles got angry, and said, he thought the college that had been good enough for him, might suffice the vagrant's child. And no sooner was it said, than he was sorry, for Eva wept at his words. He made his promise conditional, that she must exert herself also, and not retard her recovery by restlessness or fretting. She had been very unwilling to be left behind, but she dried her tears, and promised to try and become reconciled to what he required. She never entirely knew how great a sacrifice Charles inflicted upon himself, by the loss of her presence, for the two months that he obliged her to remain there.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

IT is four and twenty years since the opening of our tale: it is time the Present should close the Past—the Future still belongs to Infinity.

The wide sashes of three windows, opening upon smooth and terraced slopes of the greenest turf, which lay along the south-west side of a See-house in one of the eastern counties of England, were open to their fullest extent; for the summer day was warm and the breeze was light and balmy. Grouped on the second flat of the terrace, in front of the windows, were a band of juveniles clustering round a fountain; which, from the interest it was exciting among them, was evidently a new acquisition. There were seven of them, of different ages, from the slight graceful girl who bore so strong a resemblance to her mother—in spite of the different hue of hair and eyes—that there was no mistaking her, to the little dot of five

years old, who, with her father's huge eyes dancing as his had never done, was unwillingly withheld by her elder brother from making close acquaintance with the spattering spray.

Within the room, in two fauteuils of crimson silk, there were seated two ladies. One was far advanced in years, and habited in a widow's garb, which harmonized well with the placid subdued expression of her countenance. The other had, perhaps, passed the second score of life's allotted span; but time had dealt gently with her, and her clear, soft complexion and graceful attitude seemed to belong to a more youthful time of life. Both were unoccupied except in conversation, and even that appeared more the light desultory pastime of sociability than any connected or continued chain of communication; and there was an indolent enjoyment in the ladylike *abandon* with which they reclined embedded in the luxurious cushions, a *dolce far niente*, as if they were there for the sole pleasure of enjoying themselves and each other, and no more serious thought, for the present at least, dwelt upon their minds. Sometimes they glanced towards the windows, and a smiling remark was made on one or other of the joyous young bevy who were busily laughing

and chatting and flitting round their new plaything.

"You ought to be very happy, Eva," said the elder lady, as she watched them.

"So I shall be, mother mine, by and by when I have my two philosophers. All whom I love on earth will then be here; the *penetralia* fully furnished."

"I am rather curious to see this young *savant* you seem so fond of. You must have the bump of acquisitiveness, I think, or with seven children you never would have adopted an eighth."

"I had but three when I first took Harold, and when the family increased, he so fitted into it it never seemed as if he could be spared. His extreme cleverness has made him no expense of late years: his pupils and fellowship more than supplied him. Poor boy! he brings me his spare money, and wants me to spend it—as if I would touch the orphan's savings. I have it all put out to accumulate for him. So soon! Can it be possible?" she exclaimed, starting up with delighted surprise, as a loud ring was heard at the hall bell.

Before she could reach the door she was met by two gentlemen, one of whom, the older and more

venerable-looking caught her to his breast with an ardour that would hardly have been expected from his appearance or years ; but, perhaps, it may have been intensity of thought that has furrowed that high bald brow, and that he looks older than he really is.

“ Here he is—honors from head to foot—senior wrangler—Fellow of Trinity—Professor of Natural Philosophy—the Reverend Mr. Lyle ! ” This was said with good-humoured reference to his companion, a gentleman, habited as a clergyman also, in the prime of youthful manhood, and of whose mien beauty and intellect of a very high order were the characteristics. He had been standing modestly back, but now he approached and took the lady’s hands in his.

“ And so you have got the professorship, dear Harold. Many, many congratulations,” she murmured, as she warmly returned his fond and respectful kiss. “ This is my mother, Harold ; come and be introduced to her.” He went, but his eyes had wandered to the group on the terrace, and the lady who had so fondly kissed him, marked them.

“ No fear of this young numskull of mine being ever weighed down with collegiate honors,” said the Bishop, holding out his hand to a fine hand-

some lad about seventeen, who came bounding in through the window, having caught a glimpse of the newly arrived figures as he passed.

"I will trust to my sword for honors. At least as good have been won by it as ever were by musty books," answered the boy, with a proud contempt, which was evidently intended to extend only to the books not to his father.

"Well, Harold, how you are parsonized! white choker and all. Come out, and show yourself. They are all at the fountain; we are making it play."

But the bruit of the arrival had reached the fountain, and the remaining half-dozen were coming like a flight of birds to greet their father and adopted brother. And when little Una was tired embracing her father, she made way for another candidate for kisses, and scrambled up into Harold's arms; and he held her kindly in them, while his eyes were resting on the fair-haired favourite, who stood encircled by her father's arm. And other eyes were resting on him. His face was pale, and his beautifully cut features a little sharpened by severe reading, and his fine well proportioned figure very thin from the same cause; and the likeness recalled to Eva a sight she had once seen.

“Silence, now, children, and let me tell mamma the news.”

“I met Carterwaith at the Globe, my love, and was glad to hear of the old country. What do you think he tells me, but that Oakstone has been bought by the Romish church, and they are going to set up some kind of sisterhood there.”

“Poor Oakstone!”

“A pretty end Master Edward’s extravagance has brought it to. I should like to have bought that place, only you were so averse to it.”

“I never could have borne to live there. But you know, dear, I wanted you to buy it for Charlie, if you wished it.”

“I did not wish it when you disliked it. Whatever place I buy shall be yours for your life; Master Charlie must live by this sword that he means to do such great things with, until then. I owe all I have to you, and you shall reap the benefit of it.”

“You owe a good deal to this,” said his wife, gently touching his forehead with her lips.

“Never should have employed it as I have done, but for you; I owe all to you. I never felt that more than when I took my seat in the Lords.”

“Did you think of the day long ago?”

"Indeed I did: and droll enough, the Bishop of Oxford was next to me, and I made the speech you predicted to him, with a very agreeable variation."

"Charles, dear, did you?"

"Yes; ought I not?" he said, with a smile.

"I do not think I would have seemed as if the elevation was more than I could have expected."

"Vanity! vanity! and I am going to feed it. Where do you think I dined yesterday?"

"With the Queen," said Eva, laughing. She was determined not to underguess him.

"With the Queen at Windsor Castle."

"No! Charles; did you?"

"I surely did, and very gracious her Majesty was; and the Prince Consort talked some German philosophy to me, and very well he understands what he talks about. Now don't ask me a thousand questions; I see you are all brimful and running over with curiosity to hear what the Queen said, and what the Duchess of Sutherland wore: you must even practise a little self-denial, for I shall have no time to tell all the grand things I have been seeing and hearing until after dinner. I must see what Mr. Trench has been doing, while I have been away."

"Just tell me one thing, papa," said the beauty within his arm. "Was the Prussian Prince there?"

"He was, my darling ; and I will tell you what sweet looks he and the Princess exchanged when mamma was not looking, after dinner, when our own mamma is not listening. This much I will say, I never saw a lover look so happy as Prince Frederick William, since one day long ago, when I myself sat under a hawthorn tree, and thought the sky must have fallen, and heaven had come on earth. Go, loves, back to your fountain ;" he opened a door at the end of the room, and passed into a library, where a grave looking gentleman and two clerks sat writing.

"How gay papa is," said Eva. "When did you leave Cambridge, Harold ?" she asked, as he was being carried off by the young ones to admire the fountain.

He turned back from the window and stood beside her.

"Yesterday, ma'am; I had a note from his lordship desiring me to meet him at the Globe, and we could travel down together; but when I got there, he had gone to Windsor, and I did not see him until this morning." He remained standing to see if she had any more to say, the deepest

respect and affection in his manner. She dismissed him with, "Well, darling, I won't keep you from the others: I think some of your science is required at that fountain."

"Poor Oakstone! I am sorry it has come to such an end," said Mrs. Desmond, when he was gone.

"Oakstone has been such a dark spot upon my heart," said Eva, "that nothing scarcely seems an aggravation."

"Strange that you should have had two offers of it," said her mother.

"And that I should have refused them—I, who once thought to be mistress of Oakstone would have been the culmination of earthly happiness. And Agnes—how does she feel I wonder? or what has become of her?"

"My sister Jessie told me she was to join her Aunt Herbert in Bath, and that they were to live together. I was surprised at it where she has two married sisters. She will be company to Rebecca, now she is a widow. Mr. Herbert's death was a heavy loss to her."

"I dare say she feels it so, though he did die vicar of Hislop. I wonder what she thinks of a graduate of Dublin now?" A shade of bitter-

ness, very rare upon that soft face, showed that within her heart that unforgiven wrong still held its ground—the only unamiable feeling her gentle nature acknowledged. Her mother saw it and changed the subject. She was watching the bold and dashing figure of her handsome grandson through the window.

“Charlie will make a heart-breaking officer,” she remarked; “he is not in the least like his father.”

“Not a bit, within or without,” replied the lad’s mother, with a fond though half-deprecating smile, as if she were taking her absent husband’s part for the disparaging insinuation her mother’s comparison had cast upon him. “But he is a fine, good-tempered fellow; puts me something in mind of what Randal was before he was spoiled. I wish he had a little more relish for books; but he is to have the profession of his own choice, and we must only hope he will succeed. Harold being here now will be a great help towards preparing him for his examination. He has a great talent for imparting instruction; that has made him get so many pupils in college, and I am sure, weighed in his favor for the professorship: he was very young to get it. Strange that Charles’ boy

should have such unscholastic propensities, and Harold —”

She got up and walked to the window. The young professor was standing by Eva Mary's side, and neither were looking at the fountain.

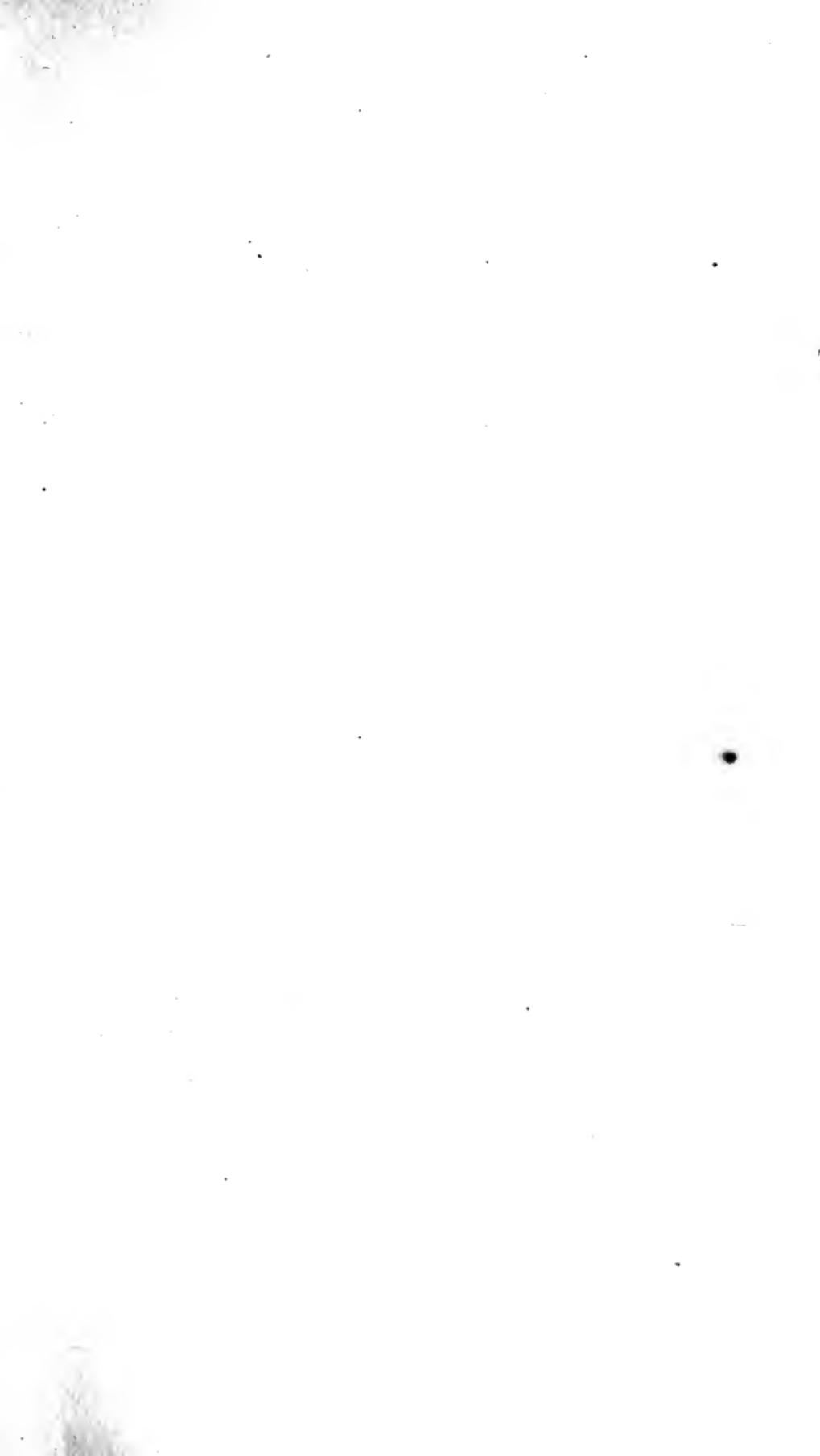
Long the mother gazed at them ; the soft light of her eyes deepening into mournful tenderness the while.

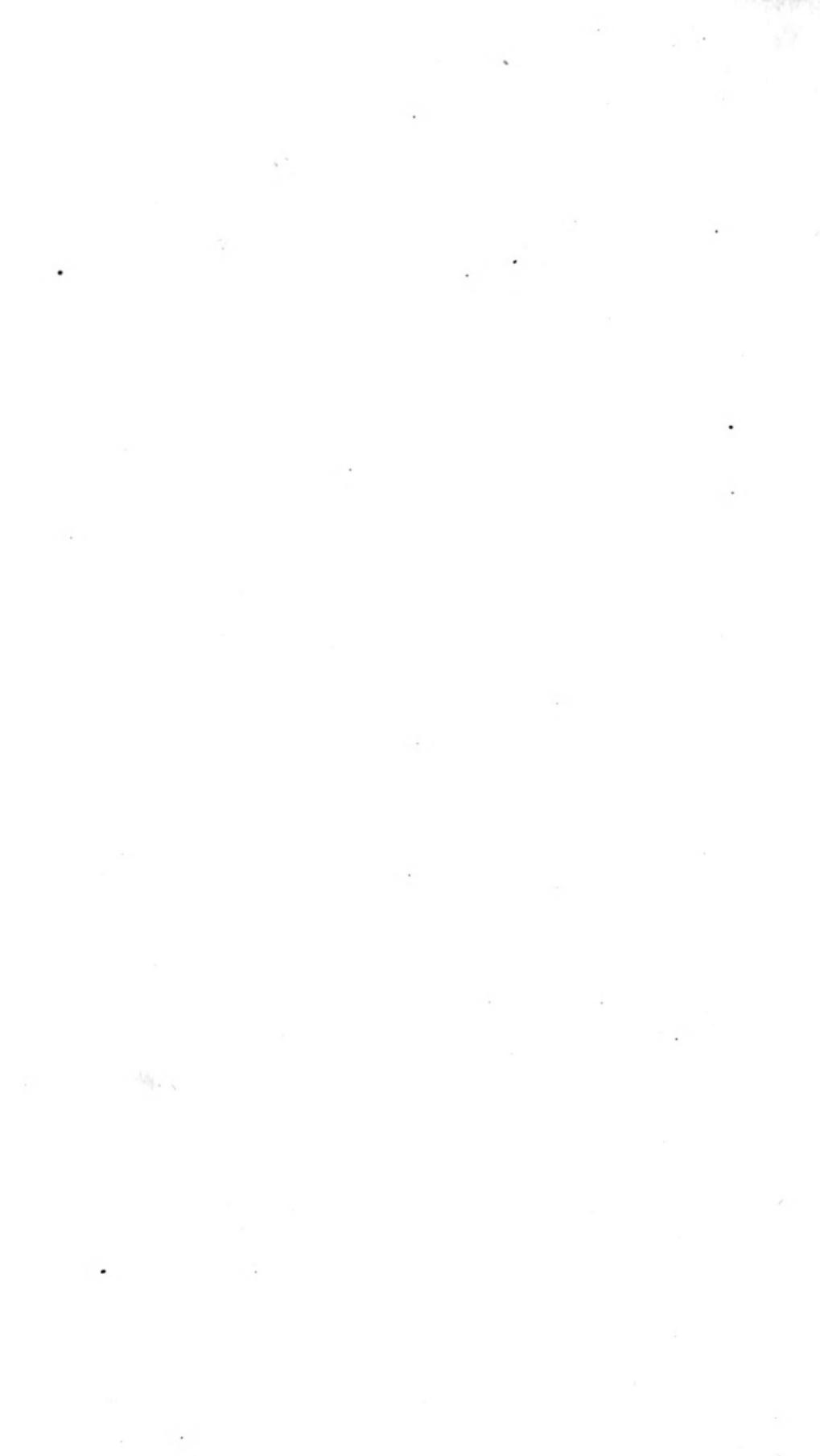
“ And if it be so,” she murmured, with a sigh, as if thinking aloud, “ my hand shall never part them.”

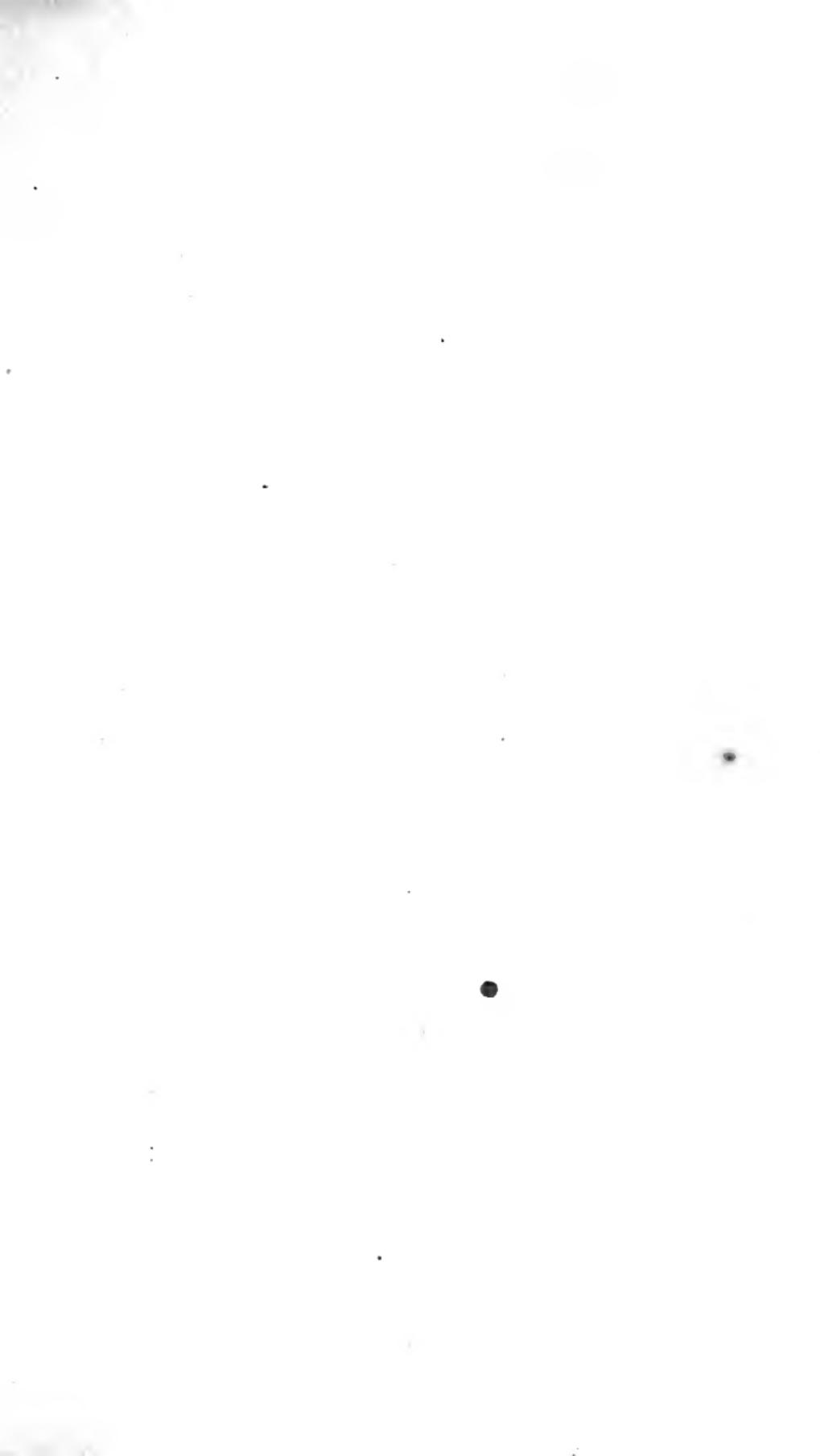
END OF VOL. III.











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